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Last-ditch talks as fears of Ukraine war intensify

Macron says Putin is open to dialogue but US warns Moscow has issued invasion orders

Hopes undermined as Belarus says Russian troops will remain in country indefinitely

Patrick Wintour
Jon Henley Paris

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, yesterday launched a desperate last-minute effort to avoid Russian invasion of Ukraine, amid further US warnings that war was imminent. He said he had persuaded Vladimir Putin to endorse urgent talks aimed at securing a ceasefire in the disputed east of Ukraine.

The two leaders agreed during a 105-minute telephone call to hold discussions in the hope of organising a summit to review Europe's future security architecture, Macron said.

But hours after his announcement, US news networks claimed US intelligence sources were briefing that Russian troops had received orders to proceed with the invasion. More than 150,000 Russian troops are massed on the borders, and yesterday Belarus's defence ministry said Russian forces sent there for military exercises would remain indefinitely.

The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said: "Everything we are seeing suggests that this is dead serious, that we are on the brink of an invasion." He added: "Until the tanks are actually rolling, and the planes are flying, we will use every opportunity and every minute we have to see if diplomacy can still dissuade President Putin from carrying this forward."

Earlier Boris Johnson said Russia planned to launch the biggest war

in Europe since 1945 by attacking Ukraine in a "bloody and protracted conflict". The west would use "all the pressure we can bring" to "make sure that this venture does not succeed".

The chink of diplomatic light came after Putin spoke on the phone with Macron, his favoured western interlocutor, yesterday morning, and the outcome, broadly confirmed by the Kremlin, suggests the Russian leader might be willing to step back from the brink of a full invasion to allow renewed diplomatic discussions. If

not, he is instead involved in an elaborate deceit of the French.

Under the plan, the French foreign minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, will meet his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, in the coming days to work on a possible summit at the highest level with Russia, Ukraine and allies, the Élysée said.

The two leaders agreed to resume work on a meeting "within the framework of the Normandy format", meaning the participants will be Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany, Macron's office and the Kremlin said.

Putin and Macron would also work "intensively" to allow the trilateral contact group - which includes Ukraine, Russia and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe - to meet "in the next few hours" in an effort to secure a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine, where government troops and pro-Russia separatists are facing each other, according to the Elysée statement.

It is too early to say if Macron has pulled off a



▲ An official observer watches the border in separatist-held Luhansk

Queen has Covid but symptoms mild - palace

Ben Quinn

The Queen has tested positive for Covid-19, ahead of the expected ending of all coronavirus restrictions in England in the coming days. Buckingham Palace said the monarch, 95, was experiencing "mild cold-like symptoms" but expected to continue carrying out light duties this week.

It was confirmed she had been in direct contact with her eldest son and heir, the Prince of Wales, the week he had the virus, while a number of cases have also been reported at her Windsor Castle home.

The announcement yesterday was made only a few weeks after the Queen, who will be 96 in April, reached her platinum jubilee of 70 years on the throne on 6 February.

The prime minister, Boris Johnson, had been speaking earlier in the day about moves to lift Covid-19 restrictions, saying: "Now is the moment for everybody to

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News

Georgian paramilitaries in Kyiv at the weekend, training Ukrainian civilians to fight Russian forces

PHOTOGRAPH: EFREM LUKATSKY/AP



US says Putin is readying troops amid frantic talks

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last-minute diplomatic coup, or if he will have the full support for his initiative from Washington and London. So far, most of the French president's diplomatic moves have been coordinated with the White House.

Gérard Araud, a former French diplomat, defended Macron, saying: "He is today the only western leader actively engaged in finding a peaceful way out of the current crisis. He does know that he may fail, and probably will, but he is right to try, and deserves our support and understanding."

The Élysée statement said "intense diplomatic work will take place in the coming days", including several consultations in the French capital, adding that the two leaders also agreed on "the need to favour a diplomatic solution to the ongoing crisis and to do everything to achieve one".

An Élysée official confirmed further talks between the two leaders were scheduled, but said Putin and Macron had "different interpretations" of what was happening in the Donbas region and who was to blame,

with the French president arguing that pro-Russia separatists were responsible, and the Russian leader insisting it was Ukrainian forces.

The Élysée official said Macron would be talking "in the next few hours" to the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, and the US president, Joe Biden. Further calls were likely to be placed to Boris Johnson, the Italian prime minister, Mario Draghi, and other close partners, the official said.

They said Putin had reiterated that Russia "intends to withdraw its troops" from Belarus once exercises were complete. "All this will have to be verified, and that could take some time," the official said, noting



Vladimir Putin and Emmanuel Macron's call lasted 105 minutes

statements by Belarusian authorities "do not appear to match Putin's words". The Belarusian defence minister has said Russia and Belarus were extending the military drills, due to end yesterday, in a step that further intensifies pressure on Ukraine.

The Kremlin said that Putin had expressed serious concern over the deterioration of the situation on the line of contact in Donbas. The Russian statement said: "Taking into account the acuteness of the current state of affairs, the presidents considered it expedient to intensify the search for solutions through diplomatic means through the foreign ministries and political advisers to the leaders of the countries participating in the Normandy format. These contacts are designed to help restore the ceasefire and ensure progress in resolving the conflict around Donbas."

The Kremlin insisted Putin was not withdrawing any of his wider demands, saying he "reiterated the need for the United States and Nato to take Russian demands for security guarantees seriously and respond to them concretely and to the point". It made no reference to Macron's proposed leaders' summit.

The statement added that Putin blamed the escalation in Donbas on the provocations of the Ukrainian security forces, and he complained of the continuing provision of modern weapons and ammunition to Ukraine by Nato countries, "which is pushing Kyiv towards a military solution to the so-called Donbas problem".

Violence in eastern Ukraine has increased in recent days as Ukraine and the two regions held by the rebels each accused the other of escalation. Russia said on Saturday at least two shells fired from a government-held part of eastern Ukraine landed across the border, but the Ukrainian foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, dismissed the claim as "a fake statement".

For years, violence has broken out along the line separating Ukrainian forces from the Russia-backed rebels, but there are fears increased shelling could set off a full-scale war.

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EU anger over London role as safe haven for Russian money

Daniel Boffey
Brussels

Britain has frustrated its EU allies and weakened the west's financial threat to the Kremlin by failing to close a loophole that will ensure London real estate remains a safe haven for Russian money, according to diplomatic sources in Brussels.

New legislation, described as the "toughest ever" by the foreign secretary, Liz Truss, gives the government powers to freeze the assets of individuals linked to the Russian state in the event of an invasion of Ukraine, but it fails to "capture" property owned via anonymous offshore structures. The irritation in EU capitals at the

perceived hole in the UK's sanctions threat has only been exacerbated by Boris Johnson's repeated calls in recent days for European governments to "wean" themselves off dependency on Russian gas.

"Parading around preaching at your allies is all very well if you have sorted your own house out," said one diplomatic source. "But they haven't. You only need to look at the number of empty properties in Kensington and Chelsea to know that."

Truss had claimed that legislation laid in parliament on 10 February left the oligarchs with "nowhere to hide" as the UK is able to sanction entities and businesses of economic and strategic significance to the Russian government, as well as their owners, directors and trustees.

But EU capitals are concerned by the failure of the government to ensure that the identity of those who own real estate is at hand in the event of sanctions being necessary.

According to Transparency International, more than 85,000 properties in the UK are owned anonymously by entities registered abroad.

The legal loophole in Europe's punitive package has been the subject of discussions in recent days among diplomats coordinating a response to Russian aggression. It is understood these concerns have been conveyed to London. A Foreign Office spokesperson declined to comment.

Johnson, speaking to the BBC's Sunday Morning programme yesterday, conceded that the City of London had a problem with Russian money but claimed the government would be able to expose the true ownership of property through a register of beneficial ownership.

Johnson told the BBC: "We are making sure that we open up the Russian doll of property ownership, of company ownership, in London and see who's behind everything. And we've got to do it and we've got to hit very hard."

However, such a database has not been established despite promises made by the government since 2016. Plans for an economic crime bill had been included in the 2019 Queen's speech, but the legislation has yet to materialise.

▼ Milli Smith (reserve), Hailey Duff, Jen Dodds, Vicky Wright and Eve Muirhead with their gold medals after beating Japan yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: LINTAO ZHANG/GETTY IMAGES



▲ The British men's team - Ross Whyte, Hammy McMillan, Bobby Lammie, Grant Hardie and Bruce Mouat - with their silver medals

Curlers spare a nation's blushes - but Team GB will have to raise its game

Sean Ingle
Beijing

They came, they curled, they conquered. And, on the very last day of these Winter Olympics, four rock stars finally won Team GB's first gold medal in Beijing.

Almost 700,000 people were watching back home in the early hours of yesterday morning as Eve Muirhead's quartet brushed Japan aside 10-3 in the women's curling final - to complement the silver medal won by the men's team on Saturday.

The victory also capped a remarkable turnaround for Muirhead - the Iron Lady of curling - and her teammates Vicky Wright, Jen Dodds, and Hailey Duff, after they initially struggled to qualify for these Games.

They also had Covid before a final qualifying tournament in December, lost four matches in the round robin stages, and only snuck into the semi-finals after other results went their way. Even then they were 4-0 down to Sweden before a stunning reversal of fortune.

Yet when the stakes were at their highest, Britain's women played it ice cool. "It's definitely been a roller-coaster journey for the whole team," said Muirhead, who burst into tears of relief on the podium. "For me it

was a very tough summer with the pandemic, with lockdown, with not initially qualifying for the Olympics. There were days when I just wanted to throw my shoes in the cupboard and not take them out again.

"But we all came back, we had this new team put together, we then won the Europeans and then the Olympic qualifying tournament. There have been ups and downs, there has been a couple of positive tests, but here we are, five [including the team's reserve, Milli Smith] very healthy girls with gold medals round their necks."

Afterwards their coach, David Murdoch, gave a succinct assessment of what he had witnessed. "It was a perfect performance," he said. It also provided a much needed fillip for Team GB after a Winter Olympics in which a bobsleigh overturning at 83mph and a speed skater stopping a lap too early had threatened to become its defining images.

Now, though, it will be the sight of Muirhead dramatically clearing out a Japanese stone to score four for Team GB in the seventh end - which in effect sealed victory - that will linger longest in the memories.

► Hailey Duff, Eve Muirhead and Jennifer Dodds during the gold medal match, which they won 10-3

PHOTOGRAPH: CATHERINE IVILL/GETTY

Four years ago the Scot had fluffed a straightforward shot to win bronze against Japan. This very much felt like a redemption rock. "It took me a long time to get over it and even now I still think of that shot," admitted Muirhead. "Hopefully it will be out of my mind now."

GB curling's performance director, Nigel Holl, attributed the unprecedented success in Beijing to the building of a national centre in Stirling in 2017.

Since then the British teams have been able to train full time, which

'It was a very tough summer. There were days when I wanted to throw my shoes in the cupboard and not take them out again'

Eve Muirhead
Skipper, Team GB



gives them a significant advantage over many rivals.

Holl also cited the introduction of a squad system, which meant nine women had to fight each other for four places, as a way of increasing the level of competition and standards.

Another standout star of the British team was Wright, who has combined her sport with helping Covid patients. Having returned to nursing full-time during the pandemic, she still works one day a week at Forth Valley Royal hospital in Larbert, near Falkirk, and said she would be back on the wards next week.

"They would have stayed up to watch last night," she said. "I can't wait to see them when I go back. I told them I'd do my best to bring a medal back and to take a gold one, I can't believe it."

This victory was also hailed by Rhona Howie, whose "stone of destiny" brought Britain's last curling gold medal at the 2002 Games in Salt Lake City.

"They never had it easy here, they had to fight all the way," she said. "That's where the true grit and determination that Eve has comes in. She'll never stop fighting. Like we did 20 years ago, you get given that chance and my goodness you take it."

However, despite the late successes, Britain's two medals still fell short of the target of between three and seven for Beijing. Afterwards the chief executive of UK Sport, Sally Munday, admitted she was "disappointed" by the overall performance.

"It's fair to say that these Games have been a setback in Great Britain's Olympic success story," she said. "We've taken some blows. And I think probably you could liken us to a wounded lion. We will go away, we will lick our wounds. But please be assured we will come back and roar stronger for Milan-Cortina in 2026."

Munday refused to be drawn on whether there might be cuts to programmes such as skeleton, which received £6.4m to prepare for the Beijing Games only for its athletes to be way off the pace, saying there would have to be a comprehensive review first.

Skeleton is seen as particularly vulnerable as there are no tracks in Britain for people to try the sport, while the enormous tech advantage Team GB once had looked to be completely eroded in China.

"We mustn't lose sight of some of the exciting performances that we have seen over these two weeks and that does offer us some optimism," said Munday, who said she hoped to see an increase in the £28m budget for these Winter Games.

"It's important for me to say that the last two weeks have not altered our ambition to become an ever greater force in winter sport."



Queen tests positive for Covid-19 but symptoms mild, says palace

▲ The Queen meets R Adm James Macleod, right, and Maj Gen Eldon Millar at Windsor last week

PHOTOGRAPH: STEVE PARSONS/AFP/GETTY

Continued from page 1

get their confidence back.” He later tweeted: “I’m sure I speak for everyone in wishing Her Majesty the Queen a swift recovery from Covid and a rapid return to vibrant good health.”

Wishes for a speedy recovery were expressed by ministers and figures including the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, who tweeted: “On behalf of myself and the whole of @UKLabour, wishing Her Majesty the Queen good health and a speedy recovery. Get well soon, Ma’am.”

Others posting messages wishing the Queen well included Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general of the World Health Organization, the prime ministers of Barbados and Israel and the president of Kosovo, along with public representatives from Commonwealth countries.

A statement released by Buckingham Palace confirmed that the Queen had tested positive yesterday. It added: “Her Majesty is experiencing mild cold-like symptoms but expects

to continue light duties at Windsor over the coming week.

“She will continue to receive medical attention and will follow all the appropriate guidelines.”

Hours after her diagnosis, the Queen was well enough to send congratulations to the British women’s curling team for an “outstanding performance” that yielded a gold medal at the Beijing Olympics.

A message from the Queen was posted from the royal family Twitter account in which the monarch offered the winning curlers her “warmest congratulations” after their 10-3 final victory over Japan.

“I know that your local communities and people throughout the United Kingdom will join me in sending our good wishes to you, your coaches and the friends and family who have supported you in your great success,” she said.

While following Covid guidelines on self-isolating after testing positive, it is also likely that the Queen will be working from her red boxes,



▲ Prince Charles last week. He tested positive after meeting the Queen

which are sent to her every day and contain policy papers, Foreign Office telegrams, letters and other state papers from government ministers and Commonwealth representatives. They have to be read and, where necessary, approved and signed.

The Queen carried out a number of official engagements virtually during the week after concerns that she may have been at risk of contracting the virus. She was pictured on Tuesday greeting the Estonian ambassador, who spoke to her via video link from Buckingham Palace. She also

received the Spanish ambassador over a video link.

Her first major public engagement for more than three months was held on 5 February, the eve of her jubilee, when she met charity workers at Sandringham, cut a celebratory cake and used a walking stick to rest on.

She is understood to be triple-vaccinated, but she had been on doctors’ orders to rest since mid October, after cancelling a run of engagements and spending a night in hospital undergoing preliminary tests.

She is believed to have spent time with Charles on 8 February, when he hosted an investiture at Windsor Castle. A few days later he tested positive for Covid, the second time he is believed to have contracted the virus, but he made a quick recovery to full health.

The Duchess of Cornwall has also tested positive for Covid, with Clarence House confirming last Monday that the duchess was self-isolating.

The royal household has its own physicians, and the Queen’s doctors

will be on hand to take care of and monitor the head of state, with Prof Sir Huw Thomas, the head of the medical household and physician to the Queen, expected to be in charge.

The Queen’s positive test comes just over four months before the celebratory weekend, in the first week in June, which forms part of plans to mark her 70 years on the throne. It has been unclear which events she will take part in, though most of the jubilee duties were already likely to be given to other members of her family.

Just a few weeks ago, the monarch had begun to resume her normal duties, hosting at Sandringham her largest reception in months, on the eve of her platinum jubilee anniversary, and a few days later held her first in-person audience with the prime minister in many weeks.

She had previously spent a night in hospital in October last year, and she was also absent from Remembrance Sunday commemorations in November after spraining her back, leaving other members of the royal family to honour the war dead in public.

She now regularly uses a stick. When asked how she was, she told two senior military officers at a Windsor Castle reception last week: “Well, as you can see, I can’t move.”

Prognosis New antiviral drugs mean radically improved outlook

Ben Quinn

With the Queen approaching her 96th birthday in April, there was always going to be concern about her contracting Covid - but the monarch has tested positive against a radically different backdrop from when the virus arrived in the UK.

In addition to the protection afforded by her vaccinations - and she is thought to have had a booster - she could also be given antiviral drugs approved by UK authorities as recently as December.

However, while engaging in “light duties”, her care at Windsor Castle will come from her “medical household”, medical staff who are part of the royal household.

At the forefront of decisions about that care will be the Queen’s physician, Sir Huw Thomas, who is a consultant at St Mary’s hospital in London and professor of gastrointestinal genetics at Imperial College London, as well as the head of the medical household.

He may choose to prescribe one or more of a number of antiviral medications designed to protect the most vulnerable, a decision which potentially might have to be made within days.

Despite the press and public



▲ The Queen cuts a cake to celebrate the start of her Platinum Jubilee. She is now said to be on ‘light duties’ after testing positive for Covid

being told that the Queen is suffering from mild symptoms, experts stress that nearly all severe Covid infections can begin with mild symptoms.

Drugs which could be considered include Ronapreve, which was approved last August and contains types of proteins called monoclonal antibodies. It has been shown to reduce the risk of hospital admission or death by 70% in those with mild to moderate Covid-19.

Two other options include drugs approved in the UK in the last part of last year: Molnupiravir, which clinical trials suggests reduces the risk of hospital admission or death by 30% and Pfizer’s Paxlovid, which has been shown to be about 90% effective in preventing the need for hospital admission. Three other drugs include Sotrovimab, Remdesivir and Dexamethasone.

The Queen missed the Remembrance Sunday event at

the Cenotaph last year due to a sprained back. Before that, she attended a busy reception for business leaders at Windsor Castle on 19 October. But the next day, she cancelled a trip to Northern Ireland on medical advice and was admitted to hospital for a night to undergo preliminary tests.

She then spent more than three months carrying out only light duties on doctors’ orders. That hospital stay was her first in eight years. In 2013, she was treated at a private clinic for a bout of gastroenteritis, staying as an inpatient for one night.

Nevertheless, as Age UK has noted, age is not the only factor influencing individual risk from Covid-19; sex, ethnicity, and some pre-existing medical conditions should also be considered.

The charity pointed out that, during the last few months of 2021, older people had remained less likely than other age groups to have coronavirus.

While reiterating that there was evidence that the protection afforded by vaccines waned over time, the charity also said that protection against serious illness remained “very high” for at least five months, and urged the elderly to get a booster.

The monarch herself expressed enthusiasm in public last year for vaccinations as she encouraged people to “think about other people rather than themselves” and get the Covid-19 jab, in a video call with health officials leading the deployment of the vaccine across the UK.

“Once you’ve had the vaccine, you have a feeling of, you know, you’re protected, which is I think very important,” she said.

Mental health NHS leaders warn millions face ‘second pandemic’

Andrew Gregory
Health editor

Millions of patients in England face dangerously long waits for mental health care unless ministers draw up a recovery plan to tackle a “second pandemic” of depression, anxiety, psychosis and eating disorders, NHS leaders and doctors have warned.

Covid-19 has sparked a dramatic rise in the numbers of people experiencing mental health problems, with 1.6 million waiting for specialised treatment and a further 8 million who cannot get on the waiting list but would benefit from support, the heads of the NHS Confederation and the Royal College of Psychiatrists have told the Guardian.

In parts of the country, specialist mental health services are so overwhelmed that they are “bouncing back” even the most serious cases of patients at risk of suicide, self-harm and starvation to the GPs that referred them, prompting warnings from doctors that some patients will probably die as a result.

Sajid Javid, the health secretary, who has acknowledged that national levels of depression have almost doubled since the start of the pandemic, is facing pressure to rapidly develop a comprehensive plan.

The call follows publication of the NHS elective recovery plan this month, which set out how the backlog of people needing surgical procedures is to be addressed.

“For a worrying number of people, the [Covid] virus is leaving a growing legacy of poor mental health that services are not equipped to deal with,” said Matthew Taylor, the chief executive of the NHS Confederation, which represents the whole of the health-care system in England.

“With projections showing that 10 million people in England, including 1.5 million children and teenagers, will need new or additional support for their mental health over the next three to five years it is no wonder that health leaders have dubbed this the second pandemic. A national crisis of this scale deserves targeted and sustained attention from the government.”

The NHS Confederation is calling for an expansion of specialist mental health care, and a recruitment drive. One in 10 consultant psychiatrist posts are unfilled.

Dr Adrian James,, the president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said: “We urgently need a fully funded mental health recovery plan, backed by a long-term workforce plan. Millions of children, young people and adults are seeking help from mental health services that are overstretched and under-resourced.”

The Department of Health and Social Care was approached for comment.

‘The virus is leaving a legacy of poor mental health that services are not equipped to deal with’

Matthew Taylor
NHS Confederation

Analysis Hannah Devlin

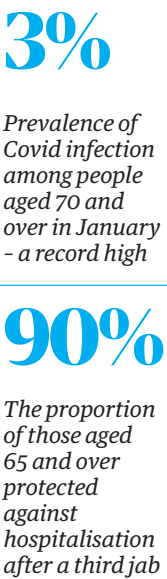
How much risk is virus to a cautious 95-year-old, and what might the royal doctors do?

The image of the Queen sitting alone mourning the death of Prince Philip has become a symbol of public sacrifice during the pandemic. And the 95-year-old monarch appears to have been fastidious in abiding by public health guidance, wearing a face mask, scaling back Christmas celebrations, and indicating her support for the vaccine. However, with continuing very high levels of Covid-19 in the community, even the most cautious are at risk.

Throughout the pandemic, older people have been disproportionately at risk from Covid-19. During the first wave, about 10% of those aged 80 years and over who were infected died.

And since March 2020, more than 5% of England’s population of those over 90 years old have died within 28 days of a positive Covid test. But during the past year, things have improved dramatically.

Vaccination has offered a crucial defence. A study of more than 200,000 people published this week found that older people have significantly lower concentrations of antibodies in their blood after vaccination than younger ones and their levels of antibodies wane more quickly. But lower rates of infection suggest that older age groups more than compensate for this higher susceptibility by behaving more cautiously and having fewer social contacts. Protection against severe disease in older age groups appears to be holding up well.



Research by the UK Health Security Agency shows that around three months after they received the third jab, protection against mild infection among those aged 65 and over dropped to about 30%.

But protection against hospitalisation remains at about 90%. Omicron has also turned out to be a milder variant, with the chance of needing hospital admission for those over 70 years of age being reduced by more than one third.

In January, the prevalence of Covid infections in the 70+ category rose above 3% - the highest at any time during the pandemic - and it remains hovering above 2%. But there has not been a huge surge in deaths.

Professor Paul Hunter, an infectious diseases expert at the University of East Anglia, said someone in their 90s would be at increased risk of severe disease compared with younger people, even if they have been triple vaccinated.

He told the PA news agency: “With somebody in their mid-90s, even if they’re triple vaccinated, you are concerned that they could gradually deteriorate over coming days and so you would need to keep a very careful eye on them. You would, I think, almost certainly be considering giving anti-viral drugs.”

They're taking the pistachio

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▼ A busy Victoria line train on the London Underground, where face masks are a condition of carriage

PHOTOGRAPH: GUY BELL/ALAMY



Experts voice concern as Johnson moves to end Covid rules in England this week

Aubrey Allegretti
Political correspondent

Boris Johnson will proclaim that the lifting of all remaining Covid restrictions in England this week marks a “moment of pride” when he unveils the government’s long-term strategy for living with the virus, despite concerns from health experts and Labour that the move is premature.

The legal requirement for anyone with Covid to isolate will be ditched a month earlier than planned, while free PCR and lateral flow tests will be axed in an attempt to rein in public spending and restore people’s confidence that life can return to normal.

The national contact tracing service is expected to be wound down

and schoolchildren will no longer be told to get tested twice a week.

Fresh guidance is expected to be issued, similar to that already published about seasonal flu, designed to let individuals make their own judgments about the risk of catching or transmitting Covid.

Following meetings over the week-end the cabinet will be assembled to rubber-stamp the plans today before a Commons statement by the prime minister and a press conference in the evening, likely to feature the government’s two leading pandemic advisers, Prof Chris Whitty and Sir Patrick Vallance.

The changes will start to come into effect from later in the week.

Johnson insisted yesterday that the country was “in a different world”

from when the pandemic started and said he wanted to “shift the balance” away from rules to advice for dealing with Covid.

He told the BBC that coronavirus “remains a dangerous disease” for vulnerable and unvaccinated people, but said it was time “to see our country really getting back on its feet”, with workers going back to their offices “in the normal way”.

To prepare for the threat of new variants emerging, it is understood that some measures will be kept in

reserve. Health sources suggested these could include lab capacity for sequencing tests and back-up contact tracing and mobile testing.

So far, 91.4% of those eligible for a vaccine have had their first dose, falling to 85% for the second and 66.1% for the third. Daily case numbers have fallen to about a fifth of the record peak seen at the start of 2022, while deaths have remained below 200 a day for the past week.

Labour argued the move to scrap all remaining Covid restrictions was premature, and accused ministers of wanting to “declare victory before the war is over”.

Wes Streeting, the shadow health secretary, said Johnson was acting like a football manager whose team was 2-1 up in the closing minutes of

a game and decided to take off the best defender.

“I’m not clear that the scientific advice supports this,” he said, adding that he stood with those groups who had raised concerns, such as the NHS Confederation, World Health Organization and British Medical Association, “any day of the week and twice on Sunday”.

He accused Johnson of having been motivated by “political weakness, not by public health”.

Tory MPs welcomed the move. However, one critic of the prime minister said it had “been brought forward as a galvanising effort for the party”, given that Johnson is under investigation by police over parties at No 10 during lockdown.

A source claimed no modelling had been commissioned by the government to examine the possible effect on Covid rates of changing for tests.

Sir David Spiegelhalter, professor of public understanding of risk at the University of Cambridge, said there was significant uncertainty about the impact of the plans.

“I can see the figures are looking encouraging, but the consequences are very difficult to predict. It may be fine, it may not be,” he said, adding that surveillance of the virus should continue through the Office for National Statistics’ infection survey.

Dr Michael Head, a senior research fellow in global health at the University of Southampton, described Johnson’s plans as the “latest in a long line of reckless policies”.

“Keeping some measures in place, including for example the requirement to wear masks in indoor spaces and requirements to self-isolate, for a few more weeks would be helpful,” he said.

Experts have expressed particular concern about clinically extremely vulnerable people, for whom Covid still poses a more serious risk. The specialist guidance that has been in place for much of the pandemic is not expected to continue.

Gemma Peters, the chief executive of Blood Cancer UK, said the government had “deliberately abandoned” this group.

Removing free lateral flow tests would “create a massive health inequality” for clinically vulnerable people whose friends, family and colleagues could not afford to take tests before contact, Peters said, while removing the requirement to self-isolate would further ramp up “risk and anxiety”.

Partygate PM refuses to say whether he would quit if fined

Aubrey Allegretti
Political correspondent

Boris Johnson has repeatedly refused to say whether he would resign if fined by the police for breaking Covid laws at a series of alleged Downing Street parties.

After returning a questionnaire to the Metropolitan police, which is expected to defend his presence at some of the dozen events under investigation, Johnson dodged a series of questions about the issue.

Asked if he would quit if Scotland Yard issued him with a fixed penalty notice worth at least £100, Johnson told the BBC’s Sunday Morning programme: “I can’t comment about a process that is under way.”

He said he would have “something meaningful to say about this” when the Met investigation ended, but insisted that any answers now “would be interpreted as a point of commentary about the process”.

Johnson added he hoped people “won’t have long” but said: “There’s not a jot I can say until it’s done.”

Previously, the prime minister has commented on specific events – including a “bring your own booze” garden party to which more than 100 Downing Street staff were invited.

The gathering was held on 20 May 2020, when only two people from different households could meet outdoors, socially distanced.

Last month, Johnson denied any wrongdoing and claimed “technically” no rules were broken and that he thought it was a “work event”. However, he apologised for the “rage” people who had made “extraordinary sacrifices” during the pandemic felt because they believed “the rules were not being properly followed by the people who make the rules”.

Asked by the BBC if he understood why people found his defence of the

event implausible, Johnson said: “There is literally not a bean I can tell you about that.”

About a dozen Conservative MPs have gone public with their concerns about Johnson’s conduct and the way in which he ran No 10 during the pandemic. However, more have expressed concerns in private about his leadership, and others are waiting for the Met inquiry to conclude and

the publication of the full Sue Gray report before putting in a letter calling for Johnson to quit.

Pressed on whether he was burying his head in the sand about the serious concerns his own MPs had about the parties, Johnson said: “I am fortunate to live in a democracy. I am fortunate to be the PM of a free, independent, democratic country where people can take that sort of decision, and where I do face that sort of pressure, that’s a wonderful thing.”

The Met has not said how much longer its investigation – known as Operation Hillman – will take.

Officers have started taking receipt of returned questionnaires sent to those – including Johnson – who it believed attended some of the dozen gatherings being investigated.

‘I am fortunate to be the PM of a free, democratic country’

Boris Johnson
Prime minister

▼ Ukrainian protesters against Russian intervention display their national flag in Odessa yesterday
PHOTOGRAPH: OLEKSANDR GIMANOV/AFP/GETTY



Belarus says Russian troops to remain as US fears Ukraine invasion approved

Luke Harding Kyiv
Pjotr Sauer Moscow
Shaun Walker Kramatorsk

Russian troops sent to Belarus for military exercises will remain in the country indefinitely, Belarus's defence ministry has said, in a decision that will further fuel concerns that Moscow is planning an imminent Ukraine invasion.

The US television networks CBS and NBC reported yesterday that US intelligence sources now believe Russian army generals have been given the go-ahead to invade Ukraine.

The news came as the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, held a 105-minute phone call with France's Emmanuel Macron and agreed to continue diplomacy.

In Belarus the defence minister, Gen Viktor Khrenin, said Russian soldiers would stay after joint drills were completed yesterday. He said the move was necessary because of the "escalation of the situation" in Donbas, in eastern Ukraine.

The Kremlin had promised to remove its forces from Belarus once the 10-day exercise, which began on 10 February, ended. It has deployed what the Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, said was the largest concentration of soldiers and weapons in Belarus since the cold war.

They include 30,000 combat troops, elite Spetsnaz units, Su-35

fighter jets and S-400 missile defence systems. Russian forces are stationed close to the Belarus border and within striking distance of Kyiv, 160 miles away. The US and UK have warned that Moscow is planning to attack the Ukrainian capital.

As recently as Wednesday, Belarus's foreign minister, Vladimir Makei, said "not a single" Russian

soldier would remain in the country after the massive joint drills – a promise echoed by Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov.

Putin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, repeated his claim yesterday that Russia had no plans to launch a military offensive. "We urge you to ask yourself the question: what is the point of Russia attacking anyone?" Peskov told the state-run Russia-1 TV.

The troop announcement follows what Ukraine's government says is a coordinated spike in violence in the east of the country, where Ukrainian soldiers and pro-Russian separatists face off across a 260-mile frontline. Since Thursday, Ukrainian positions have come under intense bombardment.

Ukraine's joint forces command said that by 6pm local time yesterday 57 artillery strikes had been launched against 13 Ukrainian-controlled villages and towns.

It blamed the "provocative shelling" on Russia. Two Ukrainian soldiers had been killed since Saturday and five wounded, it added.

Separatists from the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) have claimed they are under Ukrainian attack. Yesterday, they said two civilians had been killed near the village of Pionerskoye.

Ukraine's military dismissed the report as "an absolute fake" and said troops had been given orders to refrain from any "active action".

Russia's acting emergencies minister, Alexander Chupriyan, said yesterday evening that more than 53,000 people from Donetsk and Luhansk had crossed into Russia since the territories announced an "evacuation" on Friday, claiming Ukraine was planning to attack – a claim Kyiv denies.

The Biden administration and Boris Johnson, among others, have said they believe Russia is behind a series of recent "false flag" events, designed to give Moscow a pretext to invade.

These included a car bomb on Friday outside the separatist administration building in Donetsk, an "attack" on a water plant and a "shell" that landed across the border in Russia's Rostov region.

The situation in Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities remained calm yesterday. Demonstrators took to the streets of the Black Sea port city of Odessa, waving blue and yellow Ukrainian flags. They shouted slogans including "Glory to Ukraine" and "Putin is a prick".

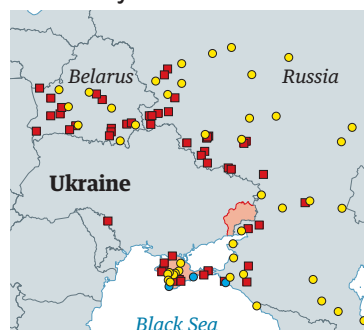
Russia has deployed at least 150,000 ground forces near Ukraine

■ Ground force ■ Air base ● Naval base

27 January



18 February



Source: CSIS Transnational Threats Project



Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Leader who won on peace ticket now on brink of war

Luke Harding
Kyiv

When Volodymyr Zelenskyy sought to become Ukraine's president, he stood on a platform of peace. He promised to sit down with Vladimir Putin and reach a deal, end the unpopular war in the east and focus on important domestic reforms. These included ridding Ukraine of corruption and oligarchs.

The plan didn't work out. Nearly three years after his landslide victory, Zelenskyy is on the brink of war. About 190,000 Russian troops are poised on Ukraine's borders. The US president, Joe Biden, has warned of a Russian attack on Kyiv. A military offensive - whether full-scale or more limited - seems likely, possibly within hours or days.

This existential crisis for Ukraine has brought Zelenskyy global attention. European leaders including Boris Johnson, Emmanuel Macron and Olaf Scholz have visited Kyiv and expressed support for its pro-western government. On Saturday, Zelenskyy met the US vice-president, Kamala Harris, and Johnson at the Munich security conference, where Ukraine's fate was discussed, and from which Russia was glaringly absent.

But critics fear that by refusing to make concessions to Moscow, Zelenskyy is steering his country towards disaster. They argue he needs to find a solution to the standoff with Putin - ruling out Nato membership for Ukraine, at least for now, a key Russian demand. The US and its allies would go along with such a declaration, privately breathing a sigh of relief, they argue.

"The Russians will keep on until Zelenskyy gets the message," said Vasyl Filipchuk, a former senior Ukrainian diplomat and foreign affairs spokesperson. "They want him to stop what

they see as anti-Russia rhetoric. A statement on Nato would calm the situation down. Moscow and Nato would be happy. A few in Ukraine's establishment would be displeased."

Filipchuk said he was concerned about the likelihood of a Russian attack, having discounted the threat until last week. Since Thursday there has been intense artillery bombardment from separatist positions. Several allegedly false-flag events - a car bomb in Donetsk, a shell landing on Russian territory - have fuelled fears that a Russian offensive is inevitable. "Zelenskyy has had a very bad crisis. He doesn't understand the depth of the problem. He's badly advised. And he's afraid," Filipchuk said.

The president's refusal to compromise over Nato is based on his fear of unpopularity, observers suggest. They believe he fears a backlash from supporters of Petro Poroshenko - his hawkish predecessor - and rightwing nationalists. In recent months, Zelenskyy's ratings have fallen, while his Servant of the People party has been hit by scandal.

Evgeniy Kiselyov, a leading journalist and talkshow host, said: "A real politician is one who can speak at a moment of national emergency." The president "lagged



▲ A bullet riddled effigy of Vladimir Putin in Luhansk, eastern Ukraine

◀ Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Boris Johnson in Munich, where Ukraine's leader received a standing ovation
PHOTOGRAPH: MATT DUNHAM/REUTERS

behind events" and was "too much" shaped by his past as a celebrity actor, Kiselyov suggested.

In public, western governments have expressed solidarity with Zelenskyy. The US, UK and Lithuania have sent anti-tank weapons and defensive arms. Washington and London have cast Ukraine's struggle with Russia as a civilisational fight between democracy and authoritarianism.

Behind the scenes, there has been exasperation. Zelenskyy has irked allies, especially the US, by dismissing predictions of invasion as panic-mongering. These scenarios have damaged Ukraine's economy, he has complained.

Zelenskyy has also criticised the US for closing its embassy in Kyiv and relocating diplomatic personnel, including CIA officers, to the western city of Lviv. "We do not have a Titanic situation here," he told the Guardian this month, saying Ukraine had already been at war for eight years, since Putin annexed Crimea and organised an uprising in the Donbas region.

"I don't think it is a good strategy. You don't bite the hand that feeds you," Kiselyov said of Zelenskyy's US critique. "Some key members of his team are so much afraid of Putin and unprepared ... psychologically. They don't know what to do if he strikes." Would Putin invade? "Difficult to say. I think he is a madman," he added.

Zelenskyy could have been shrewder in his dealings with the White House, Kiselyov said. "He could have said: 'I will support you. But give me something in return, such as a couple of bucks to help the economy.' Instead, Zelenskyy is seen whining," he said.

Zelenskyy's party colleagues say he is doing a good job in difficult circumstances. He remains Ukraine's most popular politician, and has a good chance of re-election in 2024 - assuming Moscow does not remove him by force. His party is faring less well. It looks certain next year to lose its majority in Ukraine's parliament.

"The president stays strong and calm," said Nikita Poturaev, a political consultant and deputy in Zelenskyy's party. He enjoyed meeting world leaders and was quick to build relationships with them, Poturaev added.

Perhaps the greatest criticism of Zelenskyy is that he has failed to prepare his citizens for a bloody war. Ukraine's army is in better shape than in 2014 but Zelenskyy has declined to arm civilians.

Serhiy Leshchenko, a former MP and journalist, said Zelenskyy had withstood pressure from Moscow to implement the "toxic" Minsk accords, signed in 2015 at a moment of Ukrainian military weakness.

Under the deal, Kyiv would grant autonomy to the separatist regions in return for demilitarisation. "Zelenskyy didn't betray Ukraine or give Putin what he wants," Leshchenko said. "It's just possible if he survives this crisis he can regain his political credibility."

Analysis

Patrick Wintour

Ukrainian president warns

against appeasement as the ghost of 1938 haunts Munich

Just a 20-minute walk from the ornate Hotel Bayerischer Hof, where world leaders gathered this weekend for the Munich security conference, lies No 12 Arcisstrasse, the shuttered building known as the Führerbau.

On a cold, grey Sunday morning, the building, now temporarily closed and in disrepair, has a forbidding air. Near the steps at the front is a small plaque with the bare inscription in German, Czech and Slovak: "In this building, on 29 September, 1938, the Munich Agreement was signed, which led to the smashing of the Czechoslovak Republic."

No mention is made of the signatories, including Adolf Hitler and the then British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, who, fearful of a renewed European war, appeased Hitler by agreeing to cede the Sudetenland. Hitler had promised this was his last territorial claim in Europe. The empty building, its interior preserved, stands as a monument to the diplomats' capacity to misread their opponent.

In the conference hall, no speech was complete without a reference to the threat of a return to war in the heart of Europe, or to a looming refugee crisis. No one was foolish enough to compare Russia with national socialism, but underlying every discussion was the question of Putin's true intentions and whether the western response was a sufficient deterrent, or a repeat of the appeasement of the 1930s.

In his address on Saturday, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, did not hold back in what he described as "his own horrible history lessons". Referring to the Russian-backed separatist shell that damaged a school on Thursday, he said: "Seeing a shell crater in the schoolyard, children have a question: 'Has the world forgotten its mistakes of the 20th century?' What do appeasement attempts lead to? How did the question 'Why die for Danzig?' [a

No speech was complete without a reference to the threat of a return to war in the heart of Europe, or to a looming refugee crisis

French anti-war slogan coined in 1939] turn into the need to die for Dunkirk and dozens of other cities in Europe and the world, at the cost of tens of millions of lives?"

He then twisted the knife by saying there was no threat of war - the war was already under way: "How did it happen that there is a war ongoing and people are dying in Europe in the 21st century? Why does it last longer than world war II? How did we get to the biggest security crisis since the cold war?"

Zelenskyy had answers that the western security establishment might not have applauded so hard if they had listened more closely to his withering attack on their collective failure. He blamed "selfishness, self-confidence, irresponsibility of countries at the global level. As a result, some commit crimes, and others stay indifferent. Indifference that results in complicity. This is your contribution to the security of Europe and the world."

He said: "Ukraine has been Europe's shield for eight years ... holding back one of the largest armies in the world." Yet the door to the EU and Nato had not been opened. The promises to protect Ukraine's sovereignty made in the Budapest memorandum in 1994 seemed worthless.

The current policy "has to be turned into one of guarantees of security and peace", Zelenskyy said. He urged the west to send more arms and to impose sanctions now. He had, he said, challenged western leaders who said they were 100% sure an invasion would occur. "What are you waiting for? We don't need your sanctions after the bombardment will happen and after our country will be fired on, or after we have no borders, or economy."

Yesterday, the ex-president of Estonia, Kersti Kaljulaid, gently picked up Zelenskyy's challenge, asking Charles Michel, the European Council president: "Are you ready personally to give Ukraine an emergency invitation to fast-forward discussions on accession to the EU?" Kaljulaid did not get a yes in response.

Though Michel claimed Putin's strategy was backfiring by creating unprecedented transatlantic unity, the source of his circumspection lay partly in history.

The German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, reflecting a longstanding scepticism in parts of Germany about Nato enlargement to the east, pointedly told the Munich conference Ukraine's membership was not on the agenda.

Inside
'Kikka' tribute
London fashion week celebrates designer's final collection
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News Ukraine

"Time to get out" Trauma and tears as families forced to flee to Russia

Andrew Roth Avilo-Uspenka
Pjotr Sauer Moscow

The first stop for Ella Fyodorova after she fled her home in eastern Ukraine was a windblown tent camp just across the border, part of a mass evacuation effort that observers fear may become the pretext for Russia to launch a formal intervention in Ukraine.

"I wanted to stay, but my husband came home and said 'get your things together and we're going'," she said as she wrestled her two-year-old son into a blue snowsuit to walk to the public toilets nearby.

The recent escalation in fighting had not touched her home city of Starobesheve, she said, but warnings from the Russia-backed separatist government of an imminent attack by Ukraine had driven many families to gather up their children and flee. Her husband, who dropped her at the border, had to turn back.

Now she sat in the dim light of a medical tent alongside other mothers holding their children, all waiting for the next bus to take them farther into Russia. Many left carrying just the basics: clothing, medicine, some food.

"I don't know where we're going," she said. "I don't know anything. Tomorrow we need to start searching for a place to live."

Other evacuees who spoke with the Guardian during a recent trip to the Rostov border region said they had left because of the resumption of heavy artillery fire that reminded them of the most dangerous phase of the war in 2014.

'All of us are thinking and hoping that this is the last time, that [Russia] will come in and clean them out'

Elena Kravchenko
Evacuee from the Donetsk region



"It's dangerous. I live by the airport so I heard salvos all night ... until four in the morning I couldn't fall asleep," said Natalia Klimchuk, 35, who was there with her three-year-old daughter. "I got my daughter and said it's time to get out of here."

There is evidence suggesting the sudden evacuations of the Russia-controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions were planned and likely to have been designed to set the stage for a formal Russian intervention in the country's east. The leaders of the Russian proxy states in eastern Ukraine had filmed their evacuation announcements days before they were made public, according to video metadata.

But for the women, children and others who were being evacuated the result was undeniably real and traumatic as they arrived by the hundreds into a region that appeared to be unprepared for the tide of evacuees.

In the early chaos some said they felt like pawns in a larger game.

"Maybe they'll shoot and then it will quiet down," said Viktoria from Donetsk, who was also at the tent camp. "I think it's a farce though. Like when there's a fuss and then that's all a staged event."

More than 300 evacuees were sent to the Krasny Desant sanatorium just 20 miles from the border with Ukraine. Inside, children ran through the hallways as their parents filled out intake forms and received small handouts such as sim cards. The grounds were patrolled by police, including at least one officer with an automatic rifle (they forced a Guardian correspondent to leave the sanatorium).



▲ Evacuees on a bus reach the city of Taganrog in south-western Russia

▼ People being evacuated from the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic prepare to board trains to Russia at the station in Ilovaisk

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEXANDER RYUMIN/TASS/GETTY



In a nearby church, Natalia Chetveryakova, 61, said the seaside camp had housed evacuees in 2014 when the war began in eastern Ukraine and had even hosted refugees in 2008 following the Georgian war.

Some said they were happy to be placed so close to the border and were thankful for the stipend of 10,000 roubles (£95) that the Russian government had promised to give to evacuees. Others expected better conditions.

Beckoning into her room, where she was staying with her daughter and granddaughter, Lyudmila Barskaya showed off the spartan but liveable conditions with an air of resignation.

"Here are the beds and that's all there is," she said. "All you can do is cry. I understand that it's like this for us. But nothing more for the children?"

Organisation has been a problem. A day earlier 150 evacuees from Donetsk arrived at a nearby sanatorium only to be told there was no space for them. "We made a mistake when we chose to leave," one told a reporter for the news site Meduza. A similar revolt unfolded at the Congress hotel in nearby Taganrog, where buses with stressed and tired evacuees arrived only to be turned away.

Other residents in the Russia-controlled territories have decided to ignore the evacuation order and stay at home.

"We have been hearing about Ukrainian attacks for years - I don't think it is different this time," said Tamara Fomina, 64, a pensioner from Donetsk, the largest city in the region.

Almost half of the prewar

population of 3.8 million left the separatist-controlled Donbas area during the unrest in 2014, and those who stayed appeared to be numb to the separatist warnings of a Ukrainian invasion.

"This is my home, we have been through a lot. If I die, I die, so let it be. But I am not leaving this house to go to live in some tent in Rostov," Fomina said in a telephone interview.

But many people are taking steps to prepare for an uncertain future.

Following the mass evacuation announcement, photographs showed people standing in long lines to use an ATM in Donetsk.

On Saturday the central bank of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic announced it would limit daily ATM withdrawals to a maximum of 10,000 roubles.

"There are lines everywhere. Lines for gas, for money, for food. People are worried shops won't buy new supplies," said Vlada Vologina, 34, a Donetsk resident.

Vologina also claimed that public transport in Donetsk had been paralysed because authorities used the city's buses as part of the mass evacuation operation.

Some men in Donetsk expressed worry after receiving call-up papers ordering them to report to the headquarters of the local militia yesterday.

"When I came back from work last night I saw the paper in my mailbox. This is all moving very fast," said Vadim, who asked for his last name to be withheld.

"I don't know who is at fault for all of this, but I don't want war. My wife is pregnant, and fighting a war was never in my plans," he said, adding that he was still undecided



▲ Children evacuated to Russia walk through a sleeping area set up at a sport centre in Taganrog, in the Rostov-on-Don region

PHOTOGRAPH: ERIK ROMANENKO/TASS/GETTY



whether he would go to the militia headquarters.

Meanwhile, there were signs that Russia was ramping up the evacuation efforts: a local sporting facility had been converted into a makeshift centre for more than 300 evacuees, and buses were taking others to a local railway station where they were put on a train destined for Nizhny Novgorod. Some of the evacuees arriving at the station said they had not realised they were being sent more than 650 miles north.

Some said they believed the latest events would force Russia to step in and officially recognise or even annex the territories that it had run as proxies since 2014.

"All of us who left are thinking and hoping that this is the last time," said Elena Kravchenko, a post office worker from the Starobesheve district. "That [Russia] will come in and clean them out."

Frontline Accusations that monitors are swayed by Moscow

Shaun Walker

Stanytsia Luhanska

Ukrainian officials have accused international monitors working in the conflict zone in the country's east of succumbing to pro-Russian bias, after the mission was depleted when the US, British and Canadian governments withdrew their citizens.

The mission, run by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), is made up of hundreds of unarmed monitors, often former diplomats from OSCE member states. Their armoured vehicles cross the territory on both sides of the lines to report ceasefire violations.

As Moscow looks ready to exploit the tense situation in the conflict zone to provide a pretext for the further invasion of Ukraine, the work of the monitors is more important than ever. However, just when they are most needed, their ability to work has been hampered by the decision by several countries to evacuate, due to the risk of a Russian invasion.

"We have asked for France and Germany to increase the number of monitors they have in place, and we want the OSCE to return to working according to its mandate," said the Ukrainian deputy prime minister, Iryna Vereschuk, in Stanytsia Luhanska, a town in Ukrainian-controlled territory on the frontline.

Russia insists Ukraine is planning an offensive in the east. Ukraine and western countries believe Russian claims of escalation are merely a smokescreen to give it a pretext to launch a military assault.

"It's very important for everyone to understand that it's the Russian Federation that's behind this. Ukraine has no offensive plans," said Vereschuk, after a visit to the kindergarten that was shelled on Thursday by forces in Stanytsia Luhanska.

Impact marks suggest the kindergarten was hit from the south, where the Russia-backed separatists have positions, but Russian media have suggested the incident could have been a setup. Although journalists were given access to the scene on Thursday and again on Saturday, in their daily report the OSCE said its staff were not permitted to approach closer than 50 metres to the school and were "unable to determine the weapons used or the direction of fire".

The mission's 680 monitors come from more than 40 countries, and the withdrawn American, British, Canadian and Dutch delegations represent 57, 40, 28 and seven people respectively, according to an OSCE report.

The OSCE mission has long come under suspicion on both sides of the lines, though impediments to work on the separatist side have usually been more frequent and greater. Sources inside the OSCE mission dismissed Ukrainian claims of bias.

A massive leak from one of the world's biggest private banks, **Credit Suisse**, has revealed its accounts have been used by convicted criminals, fraudsters and corrupt politicians

Special investigation
Day 1

*David Pegg, Kalyeena Makortoff,
Martin Chulov, Luke Harding
and Paul Lewis*

A

massive leak from one of the world's biggest private banks, Credit Suisse, has exposed the hidden wealth of clients involved in torture, drug trafficking, money laundering, corruption and other serious crimes.

Details of accounts linked to 30,000 Credit Suisse clients all over the world are contained in the leak, which unmasks the beneficiaries of more than 100bn Swiss francs (£80bn)* held in one of Switzerland's best-known financial institutions.

The leak points to widespread failures of due diligence by Credit Suisse, despite repeated pledges over decades to weed out dubious clients and illicit funds. The Guardian is part of a consortium of media outlets given exclusive access to the data.

We can today reveal how Credit Suisse repeatedly either opened or maintained bank accounts for a panoramic array of high-risk clients across the world.

They include a human trafficker in the Philippines, a Hong Kong stock exchange boss jailed for bribery, a billionaire who ordered the murder of his Lebanese pop star girlfriend and executives who looted Venezuela's state oil company, as well as corrupt politicians from Egypt to Ukraine.

One Vatican-owned account in the data was used to spend €350m (£290m) in an allegedly fraudulent

investment in London property that is currently at the centre of an ongoing criminal trial of several defendants, including a cardinal.

The huge trove of banking data was leaked by an anonymous whistleblower to the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung. "I believe that Swiss banking secrecy laws are immoral," the whistleblower source said in a statement. "The pretext of protecting financial privacy is merely a fig leaf covering the shameful role of Swiss banks as collaborators of tax evaders."

Credit Suisse said that Switzerland's strict banking secrecy laws prevented it from commenting on claims relating to individual clients.

"Credit Suisse strongly rejects the allegations and inferences about the bank's purported business practices," the bank said in a statement, arguing that the matters uncovered by reporters were based on "selective information taken out of context, resulting in tendentious interpretations of the bank's business conduct".

The bank also said the allegations were largely historical, in some instances dating back to a time when "laws, practices and expectations of financial institutions were very different from where they are now".

While some accounts in the data were open as far back as the 1940s, more than two-thirds were opened this century. Many of those were still open well into the last decade, and a portion remain open today.

The data, which is only a partial capture of the bank's 1.5 million private banking clients, includes 18,000 personal, shared and corporate bank accounts - holding, on average, 7.5m Swiss francs. Almost 200 clients had Credit Suisse accounts in the data worth more than 100m Swiss francs, and more than a dozen had accounts valued in the billions.

Access to the data was shared with 48 media partners around the world including the Guardian, Le Monde,



the New York Times and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) in an investigative collaboration called Suisse Secrets.

Credit Suisse has more than 1.6tn Swiss francs (£1.3tn) in assets under management and is one of Switzerland’s largest lenders, second only to UBS. It has almost 50,000 employees, including a significant workforce in Zurich, where the bank has its headquarters.

However, many of its 3,500 “relationship managers”, who find and serve wealthy clients, are spread across the world. The leaked accounts are linked to Credit Suisse clients living in more than 120 jurisdictions, with a concentration of clients in the developing world.

Countries with some of the largest numbers of clients in the data, such as Venezuela, Egypt, Ukraine and Thailand, have long struggled with political and financial elites hiding their fortunes offshore.

The timing of the leak could hardly be worse for Credit Suisse, which has recently been beset by major scandals. Last month it lost its chairman, António Horta-Osório, after he twice broke Covid-19 regulations.

That capped an unprecedented year of controversies in which the bank became embroiled in the collapse of the supply chain finance firm Greensill Capital and the US hedge fund Archegos Capital, and was fined £350m over its role in a loan scandal in Mozambique.

Just last month Credit Suisse became the first major Swiss bank in the country’s history to face criminal charges - which it denies - relating to allegations that it helped launder money from the cocaine trade on behalf of the Bulgarian mafia.

However, the repercussions of the leak could be much broader than one bank, threatening a crisis for Switzerland, which retains one of the world’s most secretive banking laws. Swiss financial institutions manage

“The pretext of protecting financial privacy is merely a fig leaf covering Swiss banks’ shameful role”

about 7.9tn Swiss francs (£6.3tn) in assets, nearly half of which belongs to foreign clients.

The Suisse Secrets project sheds a rare light on one of the world’s largest financial centres, which has grown used to operating in the shadows. It identifies the convicts and money launderers who were able to open bank accounts, or keep them open for years after their crimes emerged. And it reveals how Switzerland’s famed banking secrecy laws helped facilitate the looting of countries in the developing world.

The clients
Disgraced executives, fraudsters and traffickers

When Ronald Li Fook-shiu approached a banker to open an account in 2000, it is unlikely he was viewed as a run-of-the-mill client. A former chairman of the Hong Kong stock exchange, he was one of the wealthiest people in the city, where he was known as the “godfather of the stock market”. But he was perhaps better known for the time he had spent in a maximum security prison.

Li’s career had ended in disgrace in 1990, when he was convicted of taking bribes in return for listing companies on the stock exchange.

However, a decade later Li was nonetheless able to open an account that later held 59m Swiss francs (£26.3m), according to the leak.

He has since died, but his case is one of dozens discovered by reporters appearing to show Credit Suisse opened or maintained accounts for clients who had serious convictions that might be expected to show up in due diligence checks. There are other instances in which Credit Suisse may have taken quick action after red flags emerged, but the case nonetheless shows that dubious clients have been attracted to the bank.

Like every other bank in the world, Credit Suisse professes to have stringent control mechanisms to carry out extensive due diligence on its customers to “ensure that the highest standards of conduct are upheld”. In banking parlance, such controls are called know-your-client or KYC checks.

A 2017 leaked report commissioned by Switzerland’s financial regulator shed some light on the bank’s internal procedures at that time. Clients would face intensified scrutiny when flagged as a politically exposed person from a high-risk country, or a person involved in a high-risk activity such as gambling, weapons trading, financial services or mining, the report said.

Relationship managers were expected to use external sources to verify customers and their risk levels, according to the leak, including news articles or databases such as the Thomson Reuters World-Check platform, which is widely used in the financial services sector to flag when people are arrested, charged, investigated or convicted of serious crimes.

Such controls might be expected to prevent a bank from opening accounts for clients such as Rodoljub Radulović, a Serbian securities fraudster indicted in 2001 by the US Securities and Exchange Commission. However, the leaked data

identifies him as the cosignatory of two Credit Suisse company accounts. The first was opened in 2005, the year after the SEC had secured a default judgment against Radulović for running a pump-and-dump scheme.

One of Radulović’s company accounts held 3.4m Swiss francs before they closed in 2010. He was recently given a 10-year prison sentence by a court in Belgrade for his role trafficking cocaine from South America for the organised crime boss Darko Šarić. Radulović’s lawyer did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Due diligence is not only for new clients. Banks are required to continually reassess existing customers. The 2017 report said Credit Suisse screened customers at least every three years, and as often as once a year for the riskiest clients. Lawyers for Credit Suisse told the Guardian these periodic reviews were introduced “more than 15 years ago”, meaning it was continually running due diligence on existing clients from 2007.

The bank might, therefore, have been expected to have discovered that its German client Eduard Seidel was convicted of bribery in 2008. Seidel was an employee of Siemens. As the multinational’s lead in Nigeria, he oversaw a campaign of industrial-scale bribery to secure lucrative contracts for his employer by funnelling cash to corrupt Nigerian politicians.

After German authorities raided the Munich headquarters of Siemens in 2006, Seidel immediately confessed his role in the bribery scheme, though he said he had never stolen from the company or appropriated its slush funds. His involvement in the corruption led to his name being entered into the Thomson Reuters World-Check database in 2007.

However, the leaked Credit Suisse data shows his accounts were left open until at least well into the last

decade. At one point after he left Siemens, one account was worth 54m Swiss francs (£24m). Seidel’s lawyer declined to say whether the accounts were his. He said his client had addressed all outstanding matters relating to his bribery offences and wished to move on with his life.

The lawyer did not respond to repeated invitations to explain the source of the 54m Swiss francs. Siemens said it did not know about the money and that its review of its own cashflows shed no light on the account.

While Credit Suisse said in its statement it could not comment on any specific clients, the bank said “actions have been taken in line with applicable policies and regulatory requirements at the relevant times, and that related issues have already been addressed”.

In some instances, Credit Suisse is understood to have frozen accounts belonging to problematic clients. Yet questions remain about how quickly the bank moved to close them.

One client, Stefan Sederholm, a Swedish computer technician who opened an account with Credit Suisse in 2008, was able to keep it open for two-and-a-half years after his widely reported conviction for human trafficking in the Philippines, for which he was given a life sentence.

Sederholm’s crime first came to light in 2009, when police in Manila raided a storefront purporting to be the local chapter of the Mindanao Peoples’ Peace Movement, and discovered about 17 women in cubicles with webcams performing sex shows for foreign customers. He was convicted in 2011.

A representative for Sederholm said Credit Suisse had never frozen his accounts and did not close them until 2013, when he was unable to provide due diligence material. Asked why Sederholm needed a Swiss account,



The Marcoses

Ferdinand and Imelda pillage the Philippines

The 2000s was also a decade in which foreign regulators and tax authorities became increasingly

Pavlo Lazarenko, once prime minister of Ukraine; Ronald Li, a former chairman of the Hong Kong stock exchange

30,000

18,000

100bn

Total amount in Swiss francs held in the leaked accounts

By adopting the so-called common

This inequity in the system was cited by the whistleblower behind the leaked data, who said the CRS system “imposes a disproportionate financial and infrastructural burden

Media partners in the consortium wrote to more than 100 Credit Suisse clients in the data, asking whether they had disclosed their Swiss accounts to tax authorities. Five confirmed they had done so. Six said they were not required to declare their Swiss accounts. No others replied.

7.5m

Average amount held in each leaked account, in Swiss francs

Damaging democracy
Far-reaching effects of
helping kleptocrats

Ferdinand Marcos may have been Credit Suisse’s most notorious client. He is arguably rivalled only by relatives of the brutal Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha, who is believed to have stolen as much as \$5bn from his people in just six years. It has long been known that Credit Suisse provided services to Abacha’s sons, opening Swiss accounts in which they deposited \$214m.

Credit Suisse was publicly contrite after being kicked off a sustainable investment index over the affair.

“We understand that the index was not really happy with us being involved with Abacha - we were not happy ourselves,” a spokesperson said in 1999. “But we have addressed those problems and for several years we have taken internal measures to make sure nothing similar happens in the future.”

Banks that enable kleptocrats to launder their money are complicit in a particularly far-reaching crime. The consequences for already impoverished populations can be devastating, as state coffers are siphoned, basic standards are eroded and trust in democracy plummets.

Politicians and state officials are among the riskiest customers for banks because of their access to public funds, particularly in developing nations with fewer legal safeguards against corruption. Banks and other financial institutions are required to subject politically exposed persons, or PEPs, to the most stringent checks, known as “enhanced due diligence”.

The Credit Suisse data is peppered with politicians and their allies who have been linked to corruption before, during or after they had their accounts. None are as well known as the Marcoses or Abachas, but several wielded great power in countries from Syria to Madagascar, where they amassed personal fortunes.

They include Pavlo Lazarenko, who served a corrupt single year as prime minister of Ukraine between 1997 and 1998 before applying for an account at Credit Suisse.

One month after pressure from rivals forced Lazarenko to announce his resignation, he opened his first of two Credit Suisse accounts. One was later valued at almost 8m Swiss francs (£3.6m).

Lazarenko was later estimated by Transparency International to have looted \$200m from the Ukrainian government, allegedly by threatening to harm businesses unless they paid him 50% of their profits. He pleaded guilty to money laundering in Switzerland in 2000, and was later indicted in the US for corruption and sentenced to nine years in prison in 2006 in relation to bribes received from a Ukrainian businessman.

His lawyer said those convictions did not relate to the theft of any money from the people of Ukraine. Lazarenko, who reportedly lives in California, has resisted returning to the country, where he faces accusations he stole \$17m. His lawyer said his Credit Suisse accounts had not been accessed for two decades and were frozen in connection with court proceedings against him.



Clockwise from bottom left Khaled Nezzar, a former defence minister of Algeria; Omar Suleiman, who oversaw torture as Egypt’s spy chief; Stefan Sederholm, a Swedish computer technician jailed in 2011 for human trafficking in the Philippines

It remains unclear why Credit Suisse allowed Lazarenko to open an account and deposit such huge sums in the first place, given his background: before entering politics, Lazarenko was a functionary in charge of a collective farm.

Monika Roth, an expert on money laundering and a professor at Lucerne University, said Swiss banks had for a long time struggled to properly challenge politicians and public officials who, after stints in public office on relatively modest salaries, turned up with huge sums to deposit. She said: “Nobody wants to have asked the question: how is that possible?”

Banks that enable kleptocrats to launder money are complicit in a particularly far-reaching crime

Around the time it was doing business with Lazarenko, Credit Suisse appears to have also made inroads into the Egyptian political establishment under the dictator Hosni Mubarak, who was president for three decades until 2011. The bank’s clients included Mubarak’s sons, Alaa and Gamal, who established business empires in Egypt.

The brothers’ relationship with the bank spanned decades, with their earliest joint account opened in 1993. By 2010 - the year before the popular revolt that ousted their father - an account belonging to Alaa held 232m Swiss francs.

Following the Arab spring uprisings their fortunes changed, and in 2015 the brothers and their father were sentenced to three years in jail by an Egyptian court for embezzlement and corruption. They say the case was politically motivated, but after an unsuccessful appeal Alaa and Gamal paid an estimated \$17.6m to the Egyptian government in a settlement agreement that made no admissions of guilt.

Lawyers for the brothers rejected any suggestion they were corrupt, saying their rights had been violated during the Egyptian case, and 10 years of wide-ranging and intrusive investigations into their global

assets by foreign authorities had not uncovered any legal violations. They added that their Swiss accounts had been frozen for more than a decade, pending the resolution of investigations by the Swiss authorities.

Other Credit Suisse clients linked to Hosni Mubarak were the late tycoon Hussein Salem - who acted as a financial consigliere for the dictator for nearly three decades, amassed a fortune through preferred tender deals and died in exile after facing money-laundering charges - and Hisham Talaat Moustafa, a billionaire politician in Mubarak’s party.

Moustafa, who could not be reached for comment, was convicted in 2009 for hiring a hitman to murder his ex-girlfriend, Suzanne Tamim, a Lebanese pop star - but his account was not closed until 2014.

Another Mubarak henchman linked to Credit Suisse’s banking services was his former spy chief Omar Suleiman.

His associates are listed in the data as beneficial owners of an account that held 63m Swiss francs (£26m) in 2007. Suleiman was a feared figure in Egypt, where he oversaw widespread torture and human rights abuses.

The data reveals Credit Suisse accounts held by several more

intelligence and military figures and their family members, including in Pakistan, Jordan, Yemen and Iraq. One Algerian client was Khaled Nezzar, who served as minister of defence until 1993 and participated in a coup that precipitated a brutal civil war in which the military junta he was part of was accused of disappearances, mass detentions, torture and execution of detainees.

Nezzar’s alleged role in human rights abuses had been widely documented by 2004, when his account was opened. It contained a maximum balance of 2m Swiss francs and remained open until 2013, two years after he was arrested in Switzerland for suspected war crimes. He denies wrongdoing and the investigation is ongoing.

If ordinary Algerians, Egyptians and Ukrainians have reason to complain that Credit Suisse may have aided nefarious leaders, their grievances pale in comparison with those of Venezuelans.

Reporters working on the Suisse Secrets project identified Credit Suisse accounts linked to almost two dozen business people, officials and politicians implicated in corrupt schemes in Venezuela, most of which revolved around the state oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA).

“Corruption has always been around in PDVSA, in varying degrees and levels,” said César Mata-Garcia, an academic at the University of Dundee specialising in international petroleum law. “The words ‘Venezuela’, ‘PDVSA’ and ‘oil’ are an alarm bell for banks.”

If so, that does not appear to have stopped Credit Suisse acquiring clients later revealed to be involved in numerous US investigations and prosecutions linked to PDVSA and the looting of the Venezuelan economy.

One case involves two US-based businessmen with Venezuelan connections, Roberto Rincón Fernandez and Abraham Shiera Bastidas, who in 2009 set about bribing officials in exchange for lucrative PDVSA contracts with the help of an associate, Fernando Ardila Rueda. Among those who allegedly received bungs were the energy vice-minister, Nervis Villalobos Cárdenas, and a senior PDVSA official, Luis De León Perez.

In 2015 US prosecutors began indicting the participants; court papers make repeated reference to payments into accounts in an unnamed Swiss bank. However, the leaked data reveals all five men had Credit Suisse accounts active at the time of the offences. Of the five, four have pleaded guilty. The exception, Villalobos, is resisting extradition to the US from Spain.

Some of the Venezuela-linked Credit Suisse accounts contained enormous sums. Villalobos had as much as 9.5m Swiss francs in his account and De León had as much as 22m. Rincón, the businessman paying their bribes, had more than 68m Swiss francs in his account as of November 2015, the month before his arrest.



16

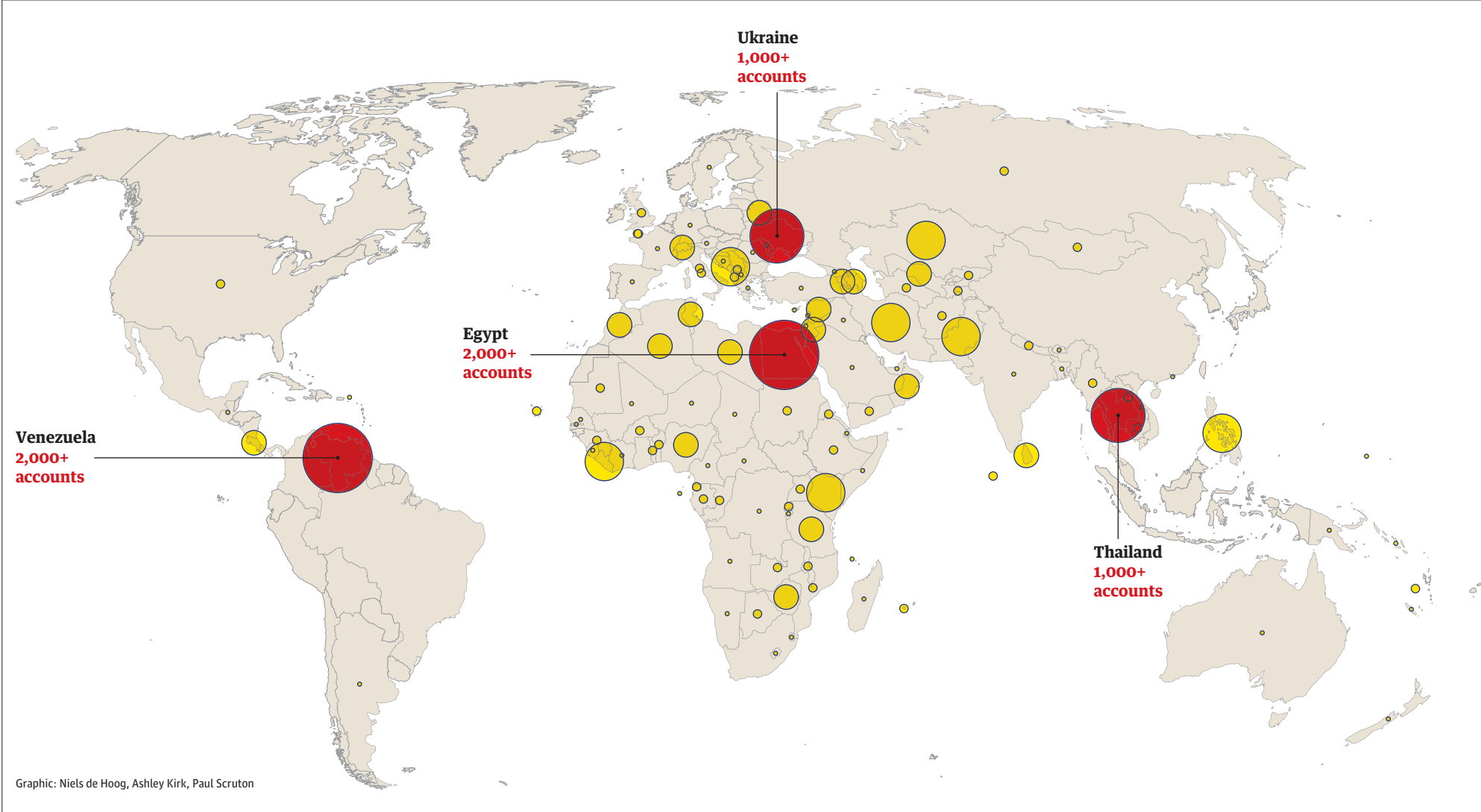
Suisse Secrets

Credit Suisse accounts

The scale of the leak spans the globe

200

Almost 200 clients had accounts in the data worth at least 100m Swiss francs



Graphic: Niels de Hoog, Ashley Kirk, Paul Scruton

Years of scandals
‘How many rogue bankers before you become a rogue bank?’

When Credit Suisse’s ornate headquarters were built in the 1870s in Zurich, they were designed to symbolise “Switzerland as a financial centre”. More than 150 years later, Credit Suisse occupies the same grand premises and Switzerland remains a global offshore centre, much as it has done for 300 years.

It is only in recent decades that Credit Suisse, one of Switzerland’s oldest and most cherished banks, has acquired its reputation for calamity. As one commentator observed last week: “The bank boasts that its purpose is to serve its wealthy clients ‘with care and entrepreneurial spirit’, but at this stage most of them would probably be happy if it could just avoid yet another major scandal.”

Horta-Osório lasted less than a year before resigning last month. Shortly after Credit Suisse appointed its new chairman, Axel Lehmann, the bank reported a loss of 1.6bn Swiss francs in the fourth quarter, in part because it had put

aside more than 400m francs to deal with unspecified “legacy litigation matters”.

And there are no shortage of those. The scandals involving Greensill, Archegos and Mozambique bonds have dogged the bank over the past year.

Over the past three decades, Credit Suisse has faced more than two dozen penalties and sanctions for offences involving tax evasion, money laundering, the deliberate violation of US sanctions and frauds carried out against its own customers that span multiple decades and jurisdictions. In total it has racked up more than \$3.7bn in fines or settlements.

‘[The bank culture] encourages its bankers to hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil, and to bury their heads’

That includes the \$2.6bn the Swiss bank agreed to pay US authorities after pleading guilty to conspiring to aid tax evasion in 2014, the \$536m it was fined by the US five years earlier for deliberately circumventing US sanctions against countries including Iran and Sudan in 2009, and other payouts to Germany and Italy over tax evasion allegations.

Against this backdrop, the Suisse Secrets revelations may fuel questions over whether Credit Suisse’s challenges are indicative of a deep malaise at the bank.

Jeff Neiman, an attorney based in Florida who represents a number of Credit Suisse whistleblowers, believes the sheer number of scandals involving the bank indicates a deeper problem.

“The bank likes to say it’s just rogue bankers. But how many rogue bankers do you need to have before you start having a rogue bank?” he said. Neiman alleges there has been a culture at the bank “which encourages its bankers probably from the top down to hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil, bury their heads in the sand on a good day, and on many days, actively assist folks to skirt whatever the law may be in order to best protect assets under management”.

Such allegations are strongly

rejected by Credit Suisse. “In line with financial reforms across the sector and in Switzerland, Credit Suisse has taken a series of significant additional measures over the last decade, including considerable further investments in combating financial crime,” the bank said in its statement, adding that it upheld “the highest standards of conduct”.

Its lawyers said it had fully cooperated with many of the investigations cited by the Guardian and that any past individual failings by the bank did not reflect its current business policies, practices or culture. In November, it announced it would put “risk management at the very core of the bank”.

The bank said its “preliminary review” of the accounts flagged by the Suisse Secrets project had established more than 90% of those reviewed were now closed or “were in the process of closure prior to receipt of the press inquiries”. Of the remaining accounts, which remain active, the bank said it was “comfortable that appropriate due diligence, reviews and other control related steps were taken, including pending account closures”. The Credit Suisse statement added: “These media allegations appear to be a concerted effort to discredit the bank and the

Swiss financial marketplace, which has undergone significant changes over the last several years.”

The debate over whether Switzerland’s banking industry has undergone sufficient reforms is likely to be renewed in light of the leak. The whistleblower who shared the data suggested that banks alone should not be blamed for the state of affairs, as they were “simply being good capitalists by maximising profits within the legal framework they operate in”.

“Simply put, Swiss legislators are responsible for enabling financial crimes and - by virtue of their direct democracy - the Swiss people have the power to do something about it. While I am aware that banking secrecy laws are partly responsible for the Swiss economic success story, it is my strong opinion that such a wealthy country should be able to afford a conscience.”

** Currency conversions are based on historical rates*

Tomorrow
Crooks, kleptocrats and crises: a timeline of Credit Suisse scandals
Plus *The hidden Swiss wealth of a Middle East monarch*



Illustration: Doug Chayka

The source of the leak appears to have made a moral choice to circumvent what they said were ‘immoral’ banking secrecy laws

that an overzealous prosecutor could think about using it against a journalist exposing wrongdoing by a Swiss bank or its clients. Any such move would be considered a brazen attack on free expression, not least in a country such as Switzerland, which is among the top 10 countries in the World Press Freedom Index.

But it is not outside the realms of possibility. The UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Irene Khan, told a reporter in the consortium of journalists investigating Credit Suisse that she was assessing article 47.

“I can say very clearly that international law gives journalists the right to publish information that is in the public interest, and financial or banking information can fall into that category, for instance if it concerns public personalities,” she said. “The right to privacy cannot be used as grounds to restrict the right of the media to publish information that may be of public interest.”

While far-fetched, the possibility that Switzerland’s prosecutors could use its banking secrecy statute to criminalise journalists led to the decision to protect Swiss media outlets from such a scenario by excluding them from the consortium investigating the leaked data.

More than 160 reporters from 48 media outlets were involved in the Suisse Secrets project – but none of them were based in Switzerland. Perversely, Swiss citizens wanting to read how the country’s second-largest lender provided services to corrupt leaders, fraudsters and war criminals can only do so via the foreign press.

“This law is a massive restriction of press freedom in Switzerland,” said Arthur Rutishauser, the editor-in-chief of Tamedia, which would have been a logical Swiss partner in the project. “The law can protect criminals and their assets. Journalists who try to expose them risk criminal proceedings.”

For media outside Switzerland, including the Guardian, the country’s radical banking secrecy law was also a consideration, albeit

a less direct one. It was among many factors considered when we weighed up the public interest case for reviewing the leaked data – and, more recently, decided to publish some of it.

There are legitimate reasons why some Credit Suisse clients might want an offshore account, and it is not illegal to have one – assuming it is declared to the tax authorities. The 30,000 Credit Suisse clients in the leaked data include customers who have done nothing wrong and have an entirely reasonable expectation of privacy in their financial affairs.

Their data was never of interest to investigative journalists focused on exposing wrongdoing and contributing to public debate about the banking system.

However, decades of scandals have made clear that Swiss banks generally – and Credit Suisse in particular – have attracted illicit funds from tax evaders, kleptocrats and money launderers. Financial crime is a serious issue of global public interest. When it involves corruption in the developing world, the impact on the planet’s poorest can be profound.

When an anonymous source leaked the Credit Suisse data to Süddeutsche Zeitung, Germany’s largest broadsheet newspaper, they knew exactly what they were doing. This was not a dump of data on the darknet or a sale to the highest bidder. The recipients of the leak – Frederik Obermaier and Bastian Obermayer – are the award-winning investigative reporters behind the massive offshore leaks that led to the Panama and Paradise papers. In leaking the data to them, the source appears to have made a moral choice to circumvent what they said were Switzerland’s “immoral” banking secrecy laws.

Months of painstaking reporting have now unearthed evidence that war criminals, human traffickers, drug lords, corrupt leaders, fraudsters and other criminals have for years been using Credit Suisse accounts. Some were allowed to open accounts years after they had been convicted of serious crimes.

In other cases, the data raises questions about unexplained wealth, or whether Credit Suisse asked basic questions about the origin of a client’s funds.

Deciding to publish these stories has been a balancing exercise. On one side: personal issues of privacy, confidentiality and data protection, and a Swiss banking secrecy law that could be used to censor reporting. On the other: the public’s right to know about wrongdoing. And our duty to reveal it.

What is in the data leak from Credit Suisse, and why are we publishing it?

by Paul Lewis *Head of investigations*

In popular culture, there is nowhere safer to stash your cash than the vault of a Swiss bank. From thrillers to spy novels, Swiss bankers are depicted as discreet men in suits who know which questions not to ask. As James Bond quipped in *The World Is Not Enough*: “If you can’t trust a Swiss banker, what’s the world come to?”

Switzerland dismisses such stereotypes as lazy and outdated. But its reputation as one of the premier tax havens has not come out of nowhere. The country has nurtured, codified and even

advertised the discretion of its bankers for centuries, enjoying lucrative returns as elites flocked to the Alps to stockpile their riches.

Over the past decade, however, things have started to change. When Switzerland began requiring its banks to share client data with some foreign authorities under a global exchange system to combat tax evasion in 2018, it was heralded as a watershed moment. Some even called it the end of Swiss banking secrecy.

Our reporting suggests that conclusion was overblown. Swiss banks do share client data

with many countries, but many developing nations are excluded from the exchange system. Meanwhile Switzerland’s famed banking secrecy law – article 47 of the 1934 Federal Law on Banks – remains in force. Those who fall foul of it risk five years in jail.

Not that long ago Switzerland strengthened its banking secrecy law, which had originally applied only to bankers and other insiders. As of 2015, the law can theoretically be applied to any third party who “reveals” or “exploits” a secret that has come from within a Swiss bank.

The wording is sufficiently vague

Cross-party tributes after Northern Ireland MP dies aged 39

Ben Quinn

Tributes from across Northern Ireland's political divide have been paid to Christopher Stalford, a Democratic Unionist party assembly member, who has died suddenly, aged 39.

The DUP leader, Jeffrey Donaldson, said he had talked at length on Friday night with Stalford, whom he described as someone "born to be a public representative".

"He was passionate about Northern

Ireland and wanted the best for his constituents. I was never to know how precious that conversation was to be," said the MP.

Stalford, who was seven when his father died aged 26 from a bleed on his brain, was born in Belfast, where he studied at Queen's University. After graduating, he worked for a number of the DUP's elected representatives and later in the party's press office and policy unit.

In 2005, at the age of 22, he was elected to Belfast city council, the youngest person on the local

authority, to represent the city's Laganbank area.

In 2016, Stalford was elected to represent Belfast South in the Northern Ireland assembly, and from January 2020 he served as the principal deputy speaker of the assembly. He is survived by his wife, Laura, and their four children.

Sinn Féin's vice-president, Michelle O'Neill, who was the deputy first minister of Northern Ireland until earlier this month, extended her sympathies, tweeting: "Desperately sad news of the sudden

passing of DUP Assembly member Christopher Stalford."

Brandon Lewis, the secretary of state for Northern Ireland, also expressed his condolences on social media, adding: "Christopher was passionate about crucial issues that affected people across NI."

The Irish taoiseach, Micheál Martin, said he was deeply saddened by the death of the DUP politician, adding: "He served the people of South Belfast diligently and with integrity, working tirelessly to improve housing and education."

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Police ordered to revisit how they handled case of black student's death

Steven Morris

The police watchdog has ordered a force to re-examine its handling of the case of a black student killed on a railway line after his parents complained his death was not properly investigated because of his race.

Romello McCook, 22, was hit by a train after a night out in Plymouth, where he was about to begin a course in architectural engineering.

British Transport Police (BTP) concluded it was an accident but his parents, Lawrence and Vivienne McCook, believe their son may have been the victim of a crime and have discovered flaws in the inquiry.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has investigated how BTP dealt with their complaint and, in a report seen by the Guardian, concluded the force should look again at how it handled their grievance.

McCook's parents, from Abingdon, Oxfordshire, welcomed the decision and hoped it would lead to a full reinvestigation. They also hope to learn more of what happened to their son when an inquest takes place in June.

Lawrence McCook said: "Romello was our only child. We brought him to this country from Jamaica hoping life would be good. He did very well. He was very popular and very happy. But the police did not do very basic things when they investigated."

Vivienne McCook added: "We felt the moment they went down there and saw it was a black person the investigation ended." She added: "We've had to become investigators."

Romello McCook was starting a new course in Plymouth in the

autumn of 2018. On the night of 29-30 September he went to a club and left in the early hours. His bank card was used in a shop at 6.05am and shortly after 10am he was hit by a train.

BTP put it down as an accident, but McCook's parents could not understand why he was more than two miles from his accommodation and walking in the opposite direction.

They were mystified that he did not have his phone with him, though he was "addicted" to it, and could not understand how he had got on to the line as there was a high fence. They established that his phone appeared to have been used after his death, suggesting it may have been stolen.

Another police force reviewed the BTP investigation and concluded there were "missed opportunities" to trace McCook's movements, including securing CCTV footage.

The report said: "The concerns of the McCooks were not heard and evidence that could have potentially answered some of the questions regarding where Romello had been and who he was with were lost."

The IOPC has written to the McCooks acknowledging "errors" made at the start of the investigation led to them "losing a significant amount of faith in the police process".

It said none of the reviews had asked the McCook family why they felt ethnicity played a part in the investigation and said their concerns should be looked at properly.

BTP said there was "no evidence or information to indicate any suspicion or third party involvement".

A spokesperson said: "We strongly refute the suggestion that his death wasn't investigated properly because of the colour of his skin."

► Romello McCook, right, in 2014 with his parents, Lawrence and Vivienne McCook, who said they had to undertake their own investigation



Crystal tears
Fashion week
pays tribute
to designer
'Kikka', 28

Jess Cartner-Morley

London fashion week has paid a glamorous tribute to the designer Federica Cavenati, known as Kikka, who died in November aged 28 after a short and sudden illness. The last collection she worked on was completed after her death by Marco Capaldo, her partner in life and in 16Arlington, their independent fashion label, and presented on the catwalk at an emotional show in Bloomsbury yesterday morning.

"This was a celebration of the most beautiful person in my life,"



Effervescent partywear by 16Arlington - from the last collection Federica Cavenati worked on

Capaldo said backstage afterwards. "I just hope that I did her proud." The mood was sombre, though the clothes were anything but. Cavenati's name was synonymous with effervescent partywear - maribou feathers, platform disco boots and barely there dance floor dresses - and that spirit lived on in snakeskin-printed leather mini dresses, lithe cut-out sequin jumpsuits and daringly tissue-thin knit dresses. Many of the feathers used in the collection were from an archive hand-dyed by Cavenati some years ago.



Fashion designer Federica 'Kikka' Cavenati died last year, aged 28

The collection was titled Tears, and teardrops were embroidered in crystal beading on to silk shirts in angel white. But there was a playfulness in the wet-look feather boas and acid-tipped fluffy buckets, which Capaldo said felt true to the "lavishly, fabulously generous" Cavenati, who "was a luminous person".

Elsewhere, the designer Alice Temperley - who moved her headquarters from London to the West Country during the pandemic, shifting to local production where possible - brought the first collection she has designed in her studio in Ilminster, Somerset, to a showroom in the capital for fashion week, but its heart remained in the countryside.

"I call this my Wild West collection, because it's my love of Somerset, with a bit of cowgirl escapism added in," she said.

Scrap targets to
limit C-sections,
hospitals told

Hannah Devlin
Science correspondent

Hospitals in England have been told to abandon targets aimed at limiting the number of caesarean sections carried out, over fears for the safety of mothers and babies.

Maternity units were told in a letter to stop pursuing "normal births", with the chief midwife describing the targets as clinically inappropriate.

The letter from Prof Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent, NHS England's chief midwife, and Dr Matthew Jolly, the national clinical director for maternity, instructed "all maternity services to stop using total caesarean section rates as a means of performance management".

The changes have been welcomed by medical bodies. Dr Jo Mountfield, the vice-president at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, said: "Both vaginal and caesarean births carry certain benefits and risks, which should be discussed with women as they choose how they wish to give birth."

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YOU CAN TASTE WHEN
EVERY LOAF IS EXPERTLY CRAFTED

Chagos Islands Exiles' return opens new front in battle for their home

**Owen Bowcott and
Bruno Rinvulcri** *Indian Ocean*

Standing in the hospital room where she gave birth to her first child, Rosemonde Bertin looked around in despair. The roof had collapsed, trees grew through the floor and an enamelled bedpan lay half concealed by ferns.

"I had my baby here," Bertin said. "He was born in 1972." That was shortly before everyone on Salomon atoll was forcibly deported by the British to Mauritius and Seychelles.

A torrential downpour, frequent in the afternoons once the equatorial sun heats the seas around the Chagos Islands, required 10 minutes' shelter under the trees. Down a sodden track through overgrown coconut palms, Bertin then led the way to the island's cemetery. Predatory frigate birds drifted overhead. Graves were covered in moss with few legible inscriptions. Rusting iron rails surrounded a few tombs.

The temporary return of exiled Chagossians, however, was not the only narrative being played out during the five-day visit last week.

Mauritian officials planted their

national flag on Salomon, Peros Banhos atoll and even a sandbank that emerged on a low spring tide at Blenheim reef on the northernmost edge of the archipelago. The national anthem was sung and a statement broadcast by the prime minister, Pravind Jugnauth, celebrating Mauritian sovereignty. A plaque, recording that the islands are inalienably part of Mauritius, was cemented into place.

As the Bleu de Nîmes, hired by Mauritius for its first formal expedition to the archipelago, sailed away, Britain's control over what it terms the British Indian Ocean Territory appeared significantly weakened.

The formal challenge to British sovereignty was initially met by Whitehall evasion: the presence of a foreign survey vessel in territorial waters explained as cooperation with a "scientific survey". But the distrust lurking behind diplomatic niceties was evident in the presence of a British fisheries protection vessel that shadowed the Bleu de Nîmes, keeping a constant distance.

The legal balance shifted decisively in favour of Mauritian arguments for sovereignty after decisions at the international court of justice (ICJ), the UN general assembly and the international



▲ *Rosemonde Bertin, who returned to the Chagos Islands last week with a group led by Mauritian officials*

PHOTOGRAPH: BRUNO RINVULCRI

tribunal for the law of the sea (Itlos) in 2019 and last year. Britain was found to have unlawfully separated the Chagos Islands from Mauritius before it granted independence in 1968. Last week's visit was the logical consequence of Mauritius seeking to enforce that internationally ratified authority. The government in Port Louis is now contemplating further legal action to enforce the Itlos ruling.

The Mauritian ambassador to the UN, Jagdish Koonjul, led the

expedition. It had accomplished four objectives, he said. "We completed the survey on Blenheim reef [for a forthcoming Itlos hearing]. We brought Chagossians back to the islands where they were born.

"We were able to exercise our sovereignty, raising the flag of Mauritius as we were travelling through the northernmost part of our territory. And we [explained] to the world [through the media] all the lies and deceits hidden for so long by certain powers."

Britain justifies its refusal to hand back the territory by pointing out that the initial ICJ judgment, on which other decisions relied, was advisory not binding.

Back in Salomon and Peros Banhos, amid derelict homes, it is difficult to understand why Britain should have organised the abandonment of such strategic settlements. The Chagossians' ancestors may have been transported as enslaved people from Africa by the first, French,

colonial overseers, but their freed descendants had established thriving communities that survived by trading coconut oil. Neighbouring Maldives now hosts a lucrative tourist industry.

The Americans, who rent a strategic military base from the UK on another island, Diego Garcia, supported the mass deportations in the early 1970s. However, the main rationale for evacuation was the consequence of a 1960 UN resolution on the right of self-determination: Britain realised it could establish a new colony, the British Indian Ocean Territory, only if no one lived there.

Ever since, the plight of the exiled Chagossians has been the emotional battleground over which legitimacy of ownership has been fought. Britain, by forcibly deporting them, denying them UK citizenship, preventing them from returning, and insulting them in Foreign Office memorandums (where they were dismissed as "Men Fridays"), has repeatedly forfeited international sympathy.

The media battle last week is the latest round in a long international campaign. The incongruity of Chagossian exiles returning on a cruise ship, replete with whirlpool baths and a deck-top bar, may have diluted the Mauritian message of colonial expropriation (and it certainly provoked criticism from the Chagossian diaspora in Crawley, Sussex). But a vessel that size, carrying tenders for surveying a large reef, was required.

Four hundred miles out from Seychelles - cutting through the deep sea's heavy swell in an area regularly swept by cyclones - the need for a robust, ocean-going ship was easy to appreciate.

'We explained the lies and deceits hidden by certain powers'

Jagdish Koonjul
Ambassador to the UN

New Hockney works on view in Cambridge show

Nadia Khomami

Arts and culture correspondent

David Hockney's latest self-portrait, painted in Normandy in November, will be on view for the first time in a new exhibition of the artist's work opening at the University of Cambridge.

Hockney's Eye: The Art and Technology of Depiction, explores the ways in which the renowned British artist sees and depicts art. It will open in March across the university's Fitzwilliam Museum and the Heong Gallery, Downing College.

The exhibition features a number of works not publicly seen before in the UK. Jane Munro, co-curator at the Fitzwilliam, said it was the first "to give serious scholarly scrutiny to Hockney's ideas as well as his art".

Through paintings, drawings, iPad paintings and video, to optical devices and innovative 3D modelling, the show "explores Hockney's views about how the art of the past was created, what he learned from it and how he transformed it", she said.

Hockney has been known to

criticise both photography and linear "Renaissance" perspective, saying they are untrue to our real experience of the visual environment. "The world is big," he wrote. "The eye is connected to the mind ... we see with memory ... A photograph sees it all at once - in one click of the lens from a single point of view - but we don't."

It was an exhibition of drawings by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres in 1999 that triggered Hockney's interest in the use of optical tools by artists before the advent of photography in 1839. He said optical tools "do not draw for you", an idea that proved controversial among art historians.

At the Fitzwilliam, Hockney's drawings, paintings and digital artworks will be displayed alongside historic works by artists including William Hogarth, Vincent van Gogh, Claude Monet, John Constable and Andy Warhol. The Heong Gallery will chart Hockney's pioneering approaches to space and visual reality, starting with a drawing he made while at the Royal College of Art in 1959.

Until 29 August



▲ David Hockney's latest self-portrait, painted in Normandy last year, goes on show in Cambridge from March PHOTOGRAPH: JONATHAN WILKINSON/DAVID HOCKNEY/PA

Rightwing war on 'woke' boosts charity support

Patrick Butler

Social policy editor

A wave of attacks on "woke" charities by rightwing politicians has backfired, generating public support for their targets and a surge in social justice activism, say campaigners.

An annual survey of social campaigning suggests that charities feel emboldened to speak out on contested issues, including race, immigration and the environment, despite attempts to silence them.

The Sheila McKechnie Foundation survey found the attacks had persuaded many charities to re-examine their mission. A third said they were now "more likely to speak out".

"The high-profile attacks on charities over the past few years seem to have backfired. Many have responded by asking themselves if they are still honouring their core mission by speaking out and concluded that, in fact, campaigning is not just their right but their duty," said Sue Tibballs, the chief executive of the foundation.



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Eyewitness

► Windsurfers ride the rough surf yesterday at Bracklesham Bay near Chichester, West Sussex
PHOTOGRAPH: PA



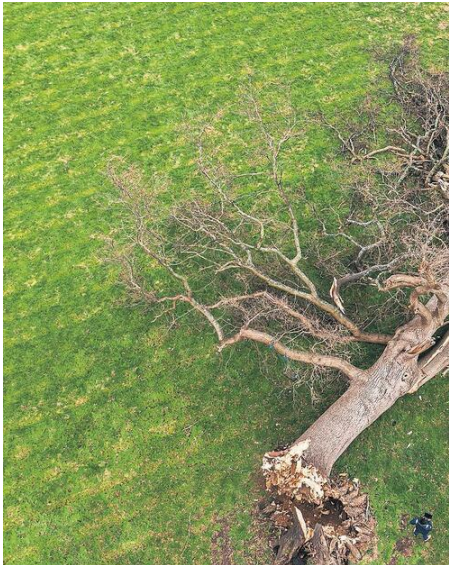
▲ Emergency workers attend a lorry that had tipped over near Chatteris, Cambridgeshire. The driver was not injured
GEOFF ROBINSON/
BAV MEDIA

► A power worker repairs electricity lines damaged by Storm Eunice at Parsons Drove, Wisbech, where Red Cross response teams helped residents
TERRY HARRIS



▼ Many trees were toppled by the storms including this huge oak, which fell in Bookham, Surrey
OLIVER DIXON

▲ A person braves the crashing waves at high tide in Aberystwyth harbour, Ceredigion
IAN JONES/ALAMY



Storm Franklin threatens UK with yet more wind damage and flooding

Josh Halliday

North of England correspondent

Large parts of the UK are braced for another day of travel chaos and power cuts today as Storm Franklin brings hurricane-force winds and flooding in the wake of the deadly Storm Eunice.

Hundreds of families in south Manchester were urged to evacuate their homes last night, while nearly 80,000 households remained without power following the worst UK storm in decades.

The Met Office said Franklin would bring gusts of up to 80mph in Northern Ireland and that England and Wales would have another day of strong winds and heavy rain.

Two severe weather warnings were in place in south Manchester, meaning there was a risk to life, along with more than 300 flood warnings and alerts across England, Scotland and Wales.

Evacuation centres were set up at a mosque in the Manchester suburb of Didsbury, and at a leisure centre in Fallowfield, after the Environment Agency said 460 properties were at risk of flooding from the Mersey.

A Met Office spokesman said an amber weather warning for strong winds was in place for Northern Ireland between midnight and 7am today, likely to bring power cuts, damage to buildings, flying debris and danger to life.

Storm Eunice caused what providers believe was a record national power outage over a 24-hour period on Friday, with about 1.4m homes affected. Four fatalities have been confirmed, with many more injured by flying debris or falling trees.

The continuing strong winds meant that tens of thousands of people would spend a fourth day without power as engineers were only able to reconnect a fraction of the 83,000 customers without any supply.

The Energy Networks Association said approximately 28,000 customers in south-west England remained without power yesterday evening.

Agencies have issued hundreds of alerts for flooding across Britain. The worst of the flooding is expected in the north and west of England, large stretches of central Scotland including the Western Isles and Orkney, and along the River Severn in Wales.

A Met Office spokesman said strong winds and heavy rain would mean disruption to the start of the working week, particularly in Northern Ireland, which looks as if it will experience the worst of Storm Franklin.

London's O2 arena will stay closed after part of its roof was destroyed by Storm Eunice, prompting the evacuation of about 1,000 people. The 22,000-seater venue said it expected a scheduled UB40 concert will go ahead as planned on Friday.



► The high waters of the River Severn threaten to flood homes in Ironbridge, Shropshire
NICK POTTS/PA



World



Police in Ottawa make final push to remove protesters

Ed Pilkington *New York*
Leyland Cecco *Ottawa*

Canadian police were making a final push yesterday to clear the streets of Ottawa of demonstrators who have paralysed the capital city by parking trucks and camping on the streets for more than three weeks in a protest against pandemic restrictions.

Police had made 170 arrests and towed 53 vehicles since they began efforts to break up the protest on Friday morning. The prime minister, Justin Trudeau, invoked rarely used emergency powers.

On Saturday, police used pepper spray and stun grenades to move out the diehards, clearing most of the area in front of parliament and next to the prime minister's office.

But pockets of protesters still remained. Some of those arrested on Saturday wore body armour and had smoke grenades and other fireworks in their bags and vehicles, police said.

"This operation is still moving forward," Ottawa's interim police chief, Steve Bell, said on Saturday. "It is not over and it will take more time until we have achieved our goals."

▲ A man steps out of a truck as police clear the area near the parliament on Saturday after weeks of demonstrations

PHOTOGRAPH:
CANADIAN PRESS/
REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

'We will identify you and follow up with financial sanctions and criminal charges'

Steve Bell
City's police chief

The Ottawa Citizen reported that hundreds of police and protesters faced off against each other on Saturday evening in Bank Street, a main commercial artery. Officers in riot gear were lined up feet away from protesters beating drums.

The protesters were initially demanding an end to cross-border Covid-19 vaccine mandates for truck drivers, but the blockade turned into a demonstration against Trudeau and his government.

Trudeau invoked emergency powers to give the government wider authority to stop the protests, including sweeping powers to freeze the accounts of those suspected of supporting the blockades, without obtaining a court order.

On Saturday night, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said it had frozen more than 100 financial accounts and that 251 bitcoin addresses had been shared with currency exchangers under the emergency powers.

Information on individuals, companies and vehicles involved in the protest had been passed to financial institutions, which had the final say on whether to freeze accounts. One

bank had already acted in advance to freeze the account of a payment processor worth almost C\$4m (£2.3m), the RCMP said.

"Police are making their way through the streets methodically and responsibly. This is encouraging, but the work is not yet done," the public safety minister, Marco Mendicino, said on Saturday.

Protesters, who have been filmed by police, will be held accountable, Bell said. "We will actively look to identify you and follow up with financial sanctions and criminal charges. ... This investigation will go on for months to come."

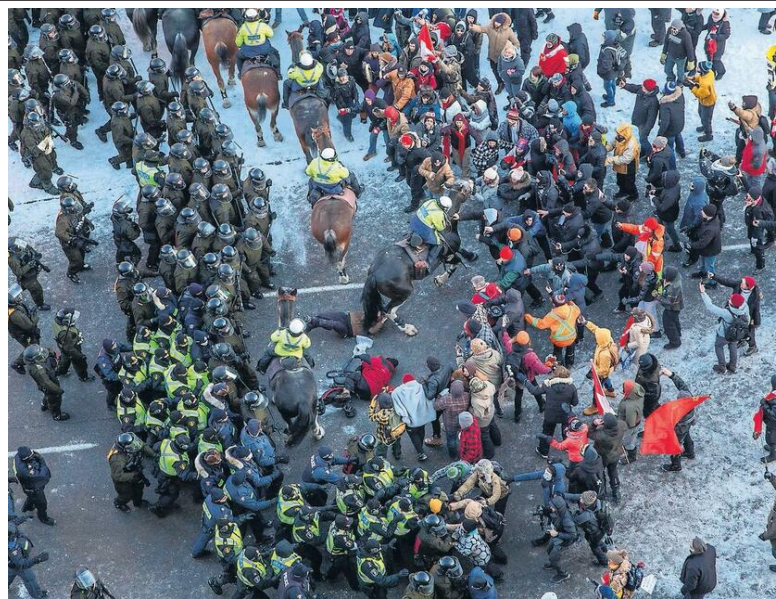
The police operation is one of the largest in Canadian history, with



▲ A protester being treated on the street for the effects of pepper spray

'Tell me if I am alive'
Missing passenger
found after ferry blaze
 Page 26

Lord of the Rings
Fans start race row
over show's casting
 Page 27



▲ Police moved into the area in front of parliament and next to the prime minister's office on Saturday to break up the demonstrators. Officers in riot gear used pepper spray (below)

and stun grenades. Some of those arrested were wearing body armour and had smoke grenades and fireworks in their vehicles

PHOTOGRAPHS: NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX/EYEVINE



officers brought to the capital from around the country.

The sweep began on Friday when hundreds of officers moved in on the self-described "freedom convoy" in downtown Ottawa. Heavy tow trucks with police escorts were brought into the area near the parliament building, where protesters were sitting in campers and other vehicles, and began clearing the obstruction one vehicle at a time.

"You can't do this. You can't do this. You have no right," pleaded one woman as a line of police pushed towards a blockade on Rideau Street. Another broke down in tears as protesters were hauled off.

As footage of arrests and scuffles spread, groups supporting the truckers reacted with shock and scepticism on the secure-messaging site Telegram. One user claimed the officers were with the United Nations, part of a common conspiracy theory that holds that Canada's government is linked to globalist networks.

As the police bore down on the protesters, there were signs of the resolve of convoy leaders wavering. Tom Marazzo, an organiser of the protest, told a press conference the

decision had been made to "peacefully withdraw". He added: "We will simply regroup as a grassroots movement."

Marazzo accused Trudeau of heading a "tyrannical regime" and said protesters were being punished for bearing Canadian flags. "What laws have we broken? They are parking infractions," he said.

There were four protest leaders among the 170 arrested.

Jeremy Glass, a protester from Shelburne, Ontario, told the Associated Press that police were gaining control of key areas in the city. "They are trying to push us all away," he said. "The main camp is seized now. We're no longer in possession of it."

The conspiracy theories and populist anger underpinning the truckers' movement are unlikely to disappear. Experts said supporters would probably try to spin the result as a victory or the catalyst for more widespread protest. Mainstream and fringe politicians have started vying for influence among the movement's supporters.

"There are a number of politicians looking to use this as a springboard," said Kurt Phillips of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network.

Death in prison of Epstein friend 'devastating' for survivors of alleged abuse

Jon Henley

Victims of a French modelling agent's alleged sexual abuse have expressed shock and dismay after he was found dead in his cell, in an apparent echo of the prison suicide of his close associate, the disgraced US financier Jeffrey Epstein.

Paris police are investigating the death of Jean-Luc Brunel, 75, who had been charged with the rape of minors and was also being held on suspicion of trafficking underage girls for sex. His body was found in La Santé prison early on Saturday.

Sources close to the investigation said Brunel had hanged himself, but this has not been officially confirmed. Epstein was found hanged in his New York jail cell in August 2019 while awaiting trial over the alleged abuse of hundreds of young girls.

Brunel was arrested in December 2020 at Charles de Gaulle airport as part of a French inquiry launched after US charges were brought against Epstein. The case is now closed unless other suspects are identified.

A frequent companion of Epstein, who travelled often to France and had apartments in Paris, Brunel was accused in US court documents of rape and of procuring young girls for his friend, and was considered central to the French investigation.

Victims of his alleged trafficking,

who were mostly said to have been lured with promises of lucrative modelling contracts, said they were angry that Brunel, like Epstein, would never face trial. Anne-Claire Le Jeune, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, described the news as "quite terrible" for them, adding that they felt Brunel had "left behind many secrets".

Le Jeune expressed the women's "frustration and bitterness over not being able to obtain justice - just as for the victims of Epstein", adding that it had taken "so much courage for them to be able to speak up, to be heard by the police".

Thysia Huisman, a Dutch former



'It makes me angry - I've been fighting for years. The end of this was to be in court'

Thysia Huisman
 Dutch former model

model who has said she was drugged and raped by Brunel as a teenager and was one of many women to identify themselves to French police as victims of the agent's abuse, said she was shocked by the news of his death.

"It makes me angry, because I've been fighting for years," Huisman said. "For me, the end of this was to be in court. And now that whole ending - which would help form closure - is taken away from me. To rebuild yourself, that is an essential step."

One of Epstein's principal accusers, Virginia Giuffre, who has said the financier once bragged to her that he had slept with more than 1,000 "of Brunel's girls", said she was disappointed by the agent's death.

Giuffre recently accepted an undisclosed sum from Prince Andrew, with no admission of liability, after bringing a civil case against the Queen's second son, with whom she says she had sex when she was 17 - a minor under US law - after being introduced to him through Epstein.

Sigrid McCawley, Giuffre's lawyer, said the news of Brunel's death was "devastating". She said: "For the women who have stood up ... it is not how these men died, but how they lived, and the damage they caused to so many."

Brunel began his career as a model scout and in 1978 was involved in setting up the prestigious Karin Models agency. He then moved to the US where he co-founded the Miami-based agency MC2. He is credited with discovering a number of models, including Christy Turlington and Milla Jovovich.

He had been placed under formal investigation for the alleged rape of two minors and for sexual harassment, and had also been questioned on suspicion of sex trafficking of underage girls. He denied all charges.

Call for statue to be made into memorial for Congo victims

Jennifer Rankin
 Brussels

A bronze statue of the 19th-century King Léopold II in the centre of Brussels could be melted down and turned into a monument to the millions who died during his brutal rule of the Belgian Congo and other victims of colonialism, an expert group has suggested.

The group of historians, architects and other specialists, commissioned by the Brussels regional government, also suggests a second option for the Léopold II bronze: creating an open-air statue park to house the equestrian work, along with other controversial monuments to figures of the colonial past.

The two scenarios were proposed in a 256-page report on the "decolonisation" of public space in the Belgian capital, which was commissioned by Brussels after Black Lives Matter protests swept across the city in 2020.

The Léopold II equestrian statue, close to the Royal Palace, became a flashpoint for protesters during what became the largest demonstrations against racism in Brussels that participants could remember.

Brussels has scores of monuments and streets named after the men who built Belgium's empire in the late 19th century's "scramble for Africa".

King Léopold II ran the Congo as his personal fiefdom from 1885-1908, a time that saw millions of people die



▲ Congo's flag held up at Léopold II's statue, at a BLM protest in 2020

of brutal treatment, hunger and disease. The Belgian state took over the Congo from 1908 until 1960, gaining colonies in modern-day Rwanda and Burundi from Germany after the first world war.

Belgium's colonial legacy, including its violence against African populations, the theft of natural resources and anti-black racism, are "established historical facts that are not always recognised and fully acknowledged by Belgium", the report states.

Some monuments could be removed to museums or a statue park; others could be renamed or put in context with information plaques.

"A decolonised public space is not a space in which all colonial traces have been effaced," the report adds, "but free of material elements that promote then and now the asymmetric relation between the former white 'civiliser' and the former colonised black person, perpetuating a racist ideology and inequalities."

The experts also propose a memorial to the victims of colonisation, as well as a museum or documentation centre where people can learn about Belgium's imperial past.

▼ Firefighters attempting to put out the blaze aboard the Euroferry Olympia off Corfu at the weekend

PHOTOGRAPH: GUGLIELMO MANGIAPANE/REUTERS



▲ Coast guards reach a lifeboat

Missing passenger found alive after ferry blaze in Greece

Helena Smith
Athens

One of 12 passengers missing on an Italian cruise liner off Corfu has been found alive, 53 hours after the ferry burst into flames while bound for Brindisi.

Rescuers who boarded the stricken ship found the man, a 21-year-old Belarusian lorry driver, on the stern of the vessel, which teams had been attempting to cool down. His first words were “tell me if I am alive”, according to local media.

Temperatures on the Italian-flagged Euroferry Olympia had exceeded 600C as firefighters had battled to extinguish fires that had raged since Friday.

Images of the man climbing down a ladder unassisted have raised hopes for the 11 passengers – all lorry drivers – still missing, Greece’s shipping minister, Ioannis Plakiotakis, said.

The men are thought to have been sleeping in the cabins of their trucks when the fire broke out on a third-level car deck at 4.12am.

The intense heat and gale-force winds had hampered rescue efforts



▲ The 21-year-old lorry driver from Belarus found alive after 53 hours

‘I thought death had come for me ... so much smoke. I feared we wouldn’t make it’

Albanian lorry driver
Interviewed on Greek TV

on Saturday, but as both subsided the operation resumed yesterday. Authorities announced that the 183-metre Grimaldi Lines ferry was being slowly towed by tug boats to a port in northern Corfu.

Two migrants not on the passenger list were among the 280 people who managed to flee the ship on lifeboats. Flames moved at speed from the car deck to the passenger deck after the blaze broke out within hours of the liner setting sail from Igoumenitsa, the largest port in western Greece, with 239 passengers and 51 crew officially on board.

Rescued passengers said there was “panic and chaos” once it became clear the fire could not be brought under control, and flames reached the passenger deck.

“It was so unreal, it was a bit like the Titanic, but it was real,” David Waller, a 58-year-old trucker, told Reuters.

Another lorry driver, described as Albanian, said he thought death had “come for me”.

“There was so much smoke. I thought we wouldn’t make it,” he told Greek state TV. “It took us about an hour and a half before we got into the

lifeboats and about three more hours before we were picked up.” Many said they had lost everything to the blaze, listing passports, money, luggage, lorries and other vehicles.

An Italian anti-financial crime police boat, which happened to be in the area, played a crucial role in the rescue operation. The Italian president, Sergio Mattarella, personally called the unit’s commander to thank him. Local fishing boats also rushed to the scene to search for people who might have jumped into the water.

The ferry’s captain and two mechanics appeared before a public prosecutor on Saturday as a judicial investigation was formally launched.

Greek officials have described the incident as the worst maritime disaster since 2014, when the Italian-owned passenger ferry Norman Atlantic caught fire in the Adriatic Sea with as many as 22 people – including stowaway passengers – losing their lives.

Athens’ shipping ministry said once the fire was extinguished, the Euroferry Olympia would be towed to a safe place so that its tanks could be emptied to avoid an environmental disaster in the area.

West imposing starvation policy on Afghans, says David Miliband

Patrick Wintour
Diplomatic editor

The west has inflicted catastrophic damage on Afghanistan and its own reputation by imposing a policy of starvation on the country, according to David Miliband, the chief executive of the International Rescue Committee.

“If we wanted to create a failed state we could not have a more effective policy mix,” he told the Guardian.

Miliband, a former UK foreign secretary, has been lobbying the Biden administration and the World Bank to release cash to start reconstructing the economy. “I simply do not understand the lack of urgency,” he said.

He warned the crisis was so deep that the UN’s appeal for \$4bn (£2.9bn) this year, due to be addressed at a pledging conference next month, was likely to rise to \$10bn next year.

There are reports that the World Bank board may meet next month to release up to £1bn.

On his first visit to London in two years, he said: “We are not punishing the Taliban. It is ordinary Afghans that are paying the price of peace. It is not just a catastrophe of choice, but a catastrophe of reputation. This is a starvation policy.”

To those who believed withholding aid would produce a more pluralist Taliban, Miliband said: “The choice is a very brutal one. It is not ‘do you help the Taliban or not?’ It is ‘do you help the people or not?’”



▲ An Afghan woman holds her child as she waits to receive aid in Kabul

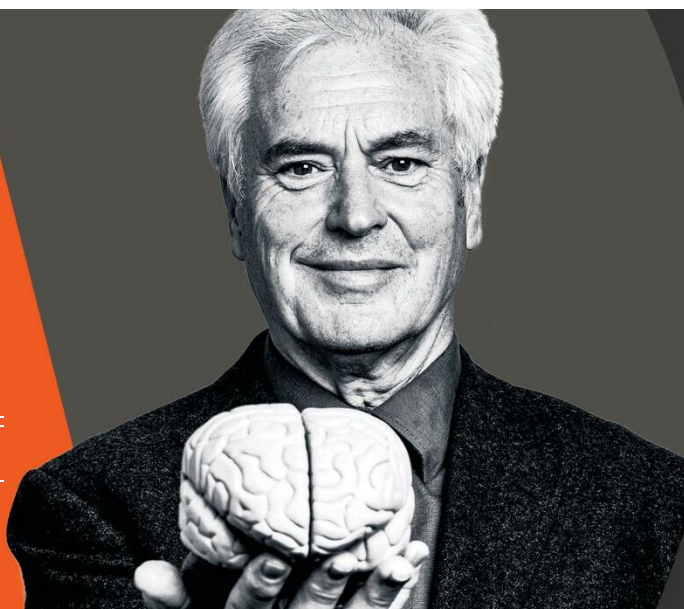
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▼ Amazon has a lot at stake: *Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* is likely to cost \$1bn over five seasons

PHOTOGRAPH: AMAZON STUDIOS/PA



'People are used to seeing fantasies as all-white. We're taking them out of what they imagined'

Ebony Thomas
Author and academic

them out of the dream space. We're taking them out of how they imagined it could be, and so it feels off to them."

The poems and legends that inspired Tolkien include characters who are not white. The Norse Prose Edda, compiled in 1220, includes the svartálfar, black elves who live in Svartálfheim. Despite that, it is a fraught time to be adapting anything with even a hint of Norseness to it. American fascist organisations use Norse iconography publicly in lieu of more easily recognized swastikas and Confederate flags while American "European heritage" groups are obsessed with Norse gods and runes.

Some fantasy devotees are refusing to cede ground to the far-right, arguing that such symbols - and fantasy more broadly - should be for everyone. "White supremacists don't own Norse mythology, even if some of them think they do, any more than they own the Bible, or the US Constitution," tweeted the author Neil Gaiman, who has written his own version of the Norse myths.

In fact, despite its deep wells of mythology, *The Lord of the Rings* is fundamentally a comforting story of middle-class heroes of multiple races who triumph over enormous odds to save their way of life by working together against a common foe. This is more of a saccharine conservatism, complicated by Tolkien's own experiences in the first world war.

"I don't think these books are 'fascist'," wrote the British fantasy writer Michael Moorcock in 1978, "but they certainly don't exactly argue with the 18th-century enlightened Toryism with which the English comfort themselves so frequently in these upsetting times." Moorcock thought Tolkien owed a lot to AA Milne; he called the *Rings* books "Epic Pooh".

US conservatives, too, especially evangelical Christians who venerate Tolkien and CS Lewis, love Tolkien's preoccupation with the simple life and disdain for the urban or industrial.

Thomas points out that the notoriously restrictive Tolkien estate approve of the adaptation. Given that race is an arbitrary construct, she said, it's no less authentic to cast black actors than it is to cast white ones.

"My ancestors have been here, speaking English, for 10 generations," she said. "It's not the case that some strange people who are not from Anglo-American culture are suddenly demanding representation. We've been here for centuries. We have been existing."

Epic battle Hardline Lord of the Rings fans start race row over show's casting

Sam Thielman

As the new *Lord of the Rings* television series gears up for its September launch on Amazon, the company has already triggered a row over race by including characters of colour in JRR Tolkien's fantasy world.

The tech group has spent a dragon's hoard of gold on adapting the beloved story famous for its cultish fans, some of whom are deeply enmeshed in the rightwing culture war industry. Yet it is fully aware its final product has to reach a broad modern audience to justify the expenditure.

The *Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* is not part of Peter Jackson's phenomenally successful *Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* movies, but it is intended to capitalise on their success: a streaming series set in the world of Tolkien's high-fantasy novels, with characters and battles drawn from the history and mythology laid forth in the books' appendices.

The series cost \$465m (£340m) to produce the first season, making it the most expensive television show in history. Over its projected five seasons, that budget will

almost certainly exceed \$1bn. It is the crown jewel in Amazon's increasing investment in licensing and producing movies and TV series, which went up from \$11bn to \$13bn last year according to the company's annual report. In general, licensing old TV shows and movies will only get more expensive, so it is in Amazon's interest to make new shows and movies to attract subscribers.

The *Lord of the Rings* appendices are more like a compilation of notes about the world of the books than a narrative of their own - so producers have woven their own stories of romance and palace intrigue into the timelines, fairy stories and genealogical footnotes.

That has allowed them to cast people of colour in the series. Sophia Nomvete plays dwarven princess Disa, for example, and Ismael Cruz Córdova is elvish warrior Arondir, while Lenny Henry has been cast as a harfoot, a variety of hobbit.

In response, a trailer for *The Rings of Power* on YouTube had 74,000 comments by yesterday, thousands of them the same quote from Tolkien: "Evil cannot create anything new, it can only spoil and destroy what good forces have invented and created." Others talk of "woke social justice warrior garbage" and "destroying Tolkien's

work" by "forcing political beliefs". Non-fans rolled their eyes, and the satirical cartoon *South Park* retroactively changed its sole black child character's name from Token to Tolkien. Similar disputes played out when actors of colour started taking roles in *Star Wars* spinoffs.

The conflict is also about the rise of two kinds of media empire: Amazon, a key part of the business



▲ Amazon's trailer shows Tolkien's mythology includes people of colour

\$465m

Cost of producing the first season of *The Rings of Power*, making it the most expensive TV show in history

74,000

Current total comments on a trailer for the series on YouTube - many saying it is 'destroying' the books

empire of Jeff Bezos, the richest man in the world; and YouTube, much of whose user-generated content expresses forceful opinions about pop culture.

YouTubers complaining about "fan mistreatment" have hundreds of thousands - sometimes millions - of subscribers devoted to movies, TV shows and comics from their childhoods. Many are constantly on the watch for a new version that might expand the role of women and add characters of colour or LGBTQ+ characters. When angry, they can coordinate broad campaigns of harassment across social media and skew perception of public opinion - which can really mess with a marketing budget.

The extremity of protest over the "unrealistic" presence of a black dwarf princess feels silly, considering the stories themselves involve wizards and dragons. But audiences, says Ebony Thomas, author of *The Dark Fantastic* and an associate professor at the University of Michigan, are not wrong when they say black characters seem as if they don't belong in the fantasy genre.

"The history of fantasy is racialised," she said. "People are used to seeing fantasies and fairytales as all-white, particularly in faux-medieval or magical-medieval settings. We're taking

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No competition
What's the future for
comparison websites?
 Page 31 →



Financial

Rightmove reports record rise in home asking prices

Phillip Inman

Asking prices for homes coming on to the market in Britain rose by a record 2.3% in February, according to the property website Rightmove.

The listing site said it was the biggest monthly increase in the 20 years it has kept records, and meant the average advertised cost of a home was up by £7,785, to £348,804. Over the past 12 months, asking prices have gone up by 9.5%.

While the number of new property listings increased by 11% during the month, the number of people looking to buy a property rose by 16%, the website said.

"This new record means that average asking prices have now risen by nearly £40,000 in the two years since the pandemic started, compared to just over £9,000 in the previous two years," a spokesperson said.

The figures show a widening gap between the number of buyers and sellers, which experts say will maintain house price inflation this year well above annual salary increases.

First-time buyers are expected to lose out in the race to buy the few properties on the market.

Wealthier buyers, many of whom have saved large deposits during the pandemic, are among those caught by the "fear of missing out", which Rightmove said would continue to drive prices higher.

Tim Bannister, the firm's director of property data, said that as Covid restrictions were lifted "we now have a group of movers who are looking to return closer to major cities, or at least within comfortable commuting distance of their workplaces".

The shortage of homes for sale could lead to bidding wars and the return of gazumping in hotspot areas.

The London property market, which stagnated after the Brexit vote in 2016, recorded the biggest annual jump in inquiries to estate agents of any region – up 24% year on year.

The capital also had its highest annual rate of price growth in the last five years as the end of pandemic restrictions and a return to the office made London and its suburbs an attractive option again.

Earlier this month, Nationwide said sale prices in January were up by 11% on the same month in the previous year, giving house price inflation in 2022 the strongest start since 2005.

The building society said property transactions in 2021 were at their



▲ Wealthier buyers may be keeping some first-timers out of the market

£40,000

Amount by which average home asking prices have risen during the pandemic, according to Rightmove

24%

Year-on-year increase in inquiries to estate agents in London, the largest rise in the country

highest level since 2007 and about 25% higher than in 2019, before the pandemic struck.

However, the low level of stock being released for sale meant the gap between the number of homes on the market and rising demand had continued to grow.

A separate report by the agents Knight Frank found that the fastest growth in property values was in the home counties and on the outskirts of London, where houses with outside space and good schools nearby were increasingly desirable.

Tom Bill, the firm's head of UK residential research, said it was more reliable to use price per square foot as a measure of value, and while this put parts of central London at the top of the pile, many fashionable areas outside the capital were catching up.

He said all wards in England and Wales with a median property price of more than £1,000 per square foot were in London. Knightsbridge and Belgravia (£2,237) and the ward next door, Brompton and Hans (£2,022), were top of the list and the only two areas in the country where the figure exceeded £2,000.

However, two wards in Oxford – Summertown and Walton Manor – and three areas to the south-west of London were the fastest risers.

"The market in north Oxford has the classic drivers of great properties, shopping and schools," said William Kirkland, the head of Knight Frank's Oxford office. "From Summertown you can walk to some very good state and independent schools, which is why people are still choosing to come here from London."

Labour urges ministers to 'come clean' on bus funding as services at risk

Gwyn Topham

Transport correspondent

Labour has urged the government to "come clean" on bus funding as operators prepare to slash services, with a critical moment for decisions over routes approaching on Wednesday.

Almost one in three services are at risk, the industry and local authorities have warned, as the Treasury refuses to confirm if it will continue grant funding to support operators whose bus revenues have yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels.

The financial lifeline will otherwise expire on 5 April, meaning many operators – who normally must give six weeks' notice to close a route – will decide this week which services remain viable.

The shadow transport secretary, Louise Haigh, said the situation could prove "devastating for the millions who depend on buses", and called on the government to avert a looming crisis.

In a letter to the transport secretary, Grant Shapps, Haigh said routes could be axed just as passenger numbers begin to recover, "locking in declining services for years to come".

She said Shapps should "come clean on wider long-term funding cuts" for the Bus Back Better strategy announced last year by Boris Johnson with £3bn to transform buses. Improvement funding has been reduced to just over £1.2bn; the government counts emergency support grants as part of the total figure.

Authorities around the country have warned of cuts, including Tyne and Wear and the West Midlands. Greater Manchester councillors said on Friday evening, following talks with local operators, that they expected to see a widescale reduction in bus frequencies and about 30 routes withdrawn.

A spokesperson for the Confederation of Passenger Transport, which represents operators, said the situation was urgent: "There's no still clarity on funding from the Treasury, and up to 30% of services face being cut."

A Department for Transport spokesperson said: "We have provided over £1.7bn to keep bus services running across the country throughout the pandemic, and are working closely with operators and local transport authorities to protect services after April."

He said the government had committed to investing £3bn into bus services by 2025.



Landscape painting

A grass artwork depicting Bismark Kpabitey, a Fairtrade cocoa farmer from Ghana, painted on a farm field in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, to mark the launch of Fairtrade Fortnight.



Abolishing 'golden visa' scheme unfair to super-rich, lawyers say

Rupert Neate

Wealth correspondent

London lawyers who helped the global super-rich apply for "golden visas" to live in Britain have called on the government to reconsider its decision to abolish the Tier 1

investor visa scheme, warning that it would be "enormously damaging" to the economy.

Kyra Motley, a partner at the law firm Boodle Hatfield, said the government was jeopardising billions of pounds in overseas investment "because of a popular myth that foreign money is dirty money".

More than 12,000 golden visas have been granted since the scheme was launched in 2008, including more than 2,500 to Russians. The programme allowed people with at least £2m in investment funds and a UK bank account to apply for residency rights along with their family.

Chetal Patel, a partner at the law firm Bates Wells, said that scrapping the investor visa because of increased tensions over Russia's threat to Ukraine would be "unfair" to other rich people wishing to come to the UK.

Analysis

Larry Elliott



Time has come for the real Rishi Sunak to stand up and tell us what he believes

There's something odd about Rishi Sunak. The chancellor has rarely been out of the news since he took over at the Treasury two years

ago and his approval rating with the public is high. His reputation as a safe pair of hands means he could be the next prime minister – yet we know little about what he believes.

While a picture of Sunak has emerged of a technocrat fascinated by Silicon Valley-style capitalism, in truth there have been only hints of an overarching philosophy.

Sunak has the chance to do something about that when he gives the Mais lecture on Thursday, an event at which previous chancellors have taken the opportunity to lay out a credo.

Nigel Lawson certainly did in 1984 when he rejected the postwar consensus that macroeconomic policy (interest rates, public spending and tax) should be about delivering full employment while control of inflation was the job of microeconomic policy (supply-side measures).

In his Mais lecture 15 years later Gordon Brown cavilled with Lawson's notion that deregulation was the key to productivity growth but broadly agreed with his view of the role of the two halves of economic policy. Indeed, Brown had handed control of interest rates to the Bank of England in 1997 for this very reason.

But the new orthodoxy only lasted for as long as the economy stayed out of serious trouble. In the financial crisis and to an even greater extent during the pandemic demand management came back into fashion. Under Sunak big-picture macroeconomic policy has all been about jobs and growth. The supply-side stuff has taken a back seat because the past two years have been dominated by crisis management and damage limitation.

In the circumstances, Sunak had no choice but to turn the Lawson-Brown orthodoxy on its

head. His strategy was costly and unavoidable, and up to a point it has worked. Furloughing workers prevented a repeat of the mass, long-term unemployment that left such deep scars in the 1980s.

The upshot has been a much bigger role for the state in the economy, a development that has been good for Sunak politically. It is because he was prepared to run the biggest peacetime budget deficit in history to save jobs that the chancellor is so popular.

All of which will make the Mais lecture timely and fascinating. Sunak is supposed to be a small-state, low-tax Conservative who just happens to be in charge of the economy when taxes as a share of national output are on course to be the highest since Labour's Hugh Gaitskell was doing the job in the early 1950s.

Doubtless there will be the usual talk of how it is important to knock the public finances back into shape, yet that would be the message from any chancellor in the current circumstances. But Sunak will also note the importance of the state in supporting the economy over the past two years, arguing that as things return to normal the respective strengths of government and the market can be harnessed to stimulate innovation and improve Britain's poor productivity record.

The emphasis on productivity makes sense because – as the National Institute of Economic and Social Research thinktank points out – the pandemic has made a poor record worse. It notes one of the hidden costs of Covid-19: as a result of missed schooling children from disadvantaged backgrounds have fallen even further behind their more fortunate peers.

The long-term effects will be an underskilled workforce and lower productivity and a cost per pupil in lost lifetime earnings of up to £22,000.

The report has some strong things to say about the deficiencies of economic policy: it is overcentralised and short-termist; industrial policy is too hands-off; investment in early years learning needs to return to the levels under Brown's government.

It is the goal of all chancellors to make the economy more productive. Before the 2010 election George Osborne used his Mais lecture to call for an economic model that did away with a reliance on unsustainable and private debt. The wait for this game-changing model goes on, which is why Thursday is the time for the real Rishi Sunak to stand up.

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It is because he was prepared to run the biggest peacetime budget deficit in history to save jobs that the chancellor is so popular



◀ Aleksandr Orlov and Sergei the meerkat, MoneyCalm Bull (with Godzilla), Affect/Effect's guitarist at Confused.com and Gio Compario are all having to adapt

PHOTOGRAPHS: COMPARETHEMARKET; MONEYSUPERMARKET; CONFUSED.COM; GOCOMPARE



'They've had huge success, but can they help us buy time in our increasingly busy and costly lives?'

Danni Hewson
Analyst, AJ Bell

No comparison What price Sergei or Gio when switching doesn't pay?

Jenn Selby

Sergei the meerkat and his operatic rival Gio Compario put comparison websites at the heart of many people's buying decisions, but soaring energy prices and new rules on insurance sales mean challenging times for the businesses they advertise.

While consumers are keener than ever to cut bills, the websites find themselves without deals to offer on energy because suppliers are not offering cheap tariffs.

Sites earn commission from providers when customers switch to them, thought to be about £30 for some energy contracts and £40-50 for insurance policies.

On Thursday, one of the biggest, MoneySupermarket, reported a 25% fall in profits last year, and said revenues from home services, including energy, were down 34%. It was expecting zero revenue from energy business this year.

GoCompare, one rival, said 2021 was a "year like no other" in the energy market. It paused that strand of its comparison service in September. "At the moment, there aren't any competitive deals available for people to compare

but we are hopeful that we can offer this service again in the near future and get back to helping our customers save money on their energy bills," a spokesperson said.

In October, USwitch advised customers to "stay put" with their current providers until further notice. "It's something we never thought we'd say," the company said at the time.

Comparison sites also face the challenge of new rules banning loyalty penalties on home and motor insurance. Regulations set by the Financial Conduct Authority came into effect on 1 January, stating that anyone renewing their policy with an existing provider

should pay no more than a new customer. Prices for customers who switch regularly have gone up.

When the rules were announced, shares in Moneysupermarket and GoCompare's parent company fell, and experts suggested the incentive to shop around for insurance would reduce once the changes bedded in.

Rising interest rates also mean the disappearance of some of the best deals on loans and mortgages.

Danni Hewson, financial analyst at AJ Bell, said the companies needed to evolve. "They have enjoyed huge success because they've become an essential tool but can that tool do more to help us buy time in our increasingly busy and costly lives?" she asked.

One way would be to focus on areas where consumers can still save money. "Many people are desperate to get away, but our collective confidence has been knocked by changing restrictions during Covid and many people will be hunting out protection before

they even start looking for their holidays," Hewson said. "Travel is expected to be a big money-maker for price comparison sites this year, along with broadband business which has become increasingly important as our homes become more and more connected."

MoneySupermarket has already laid out plans to recoup its losses - including prompting customers when savings are possible.

"While it's true that wholesale energy prices mean there are no competitive energy deals for consumers to switch to for now, there are numerous other ways we help consumers save on their household bills," a spokesperson said. "In recent months, we are seeing much more switching on borrowing and banking products, as well as travel insurance. So the ways consumers can save with us is increasing, and we are investing in our site and systems to make it easier to do so."

It would be adding car insurance to the Martin Lewis website MoneySavingExpert, which it owns, and recently bought the cashback site Quidco, which offers a range of savings.

USwitch also said there were still savings available. "Mobile and broadband customers who are out of contract will likely be able to find a better deal elsewhere," a spokesperson said. "A quarter of people are estimated to have let their broadband lapse, meaning that millions of consumers are missing out on the best deals and overpaying." It advised customers to haggle with current providers for a better deal before turning to the site for a switch.

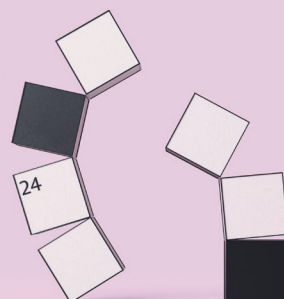
Ultimately, the energy price challenge will end and the switching market will recover, experts said. For Giles Thorne, financial analyst at the Jeffries Group, the lack of cheap energy tariffs was a "temporary rather than a structural phenomena".

And Danni Hewson said: "Consumers and companies alike won't cope if tariffs stay elevated in the long term ... We want control and we want choice and just being able to compare one product with another can help us understand what it is we really need and what we are prepared to pay for."

From "no idea"



to "thank you dear"



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The Guardian Puzzles

Weather

Monday 21 February 2022

UK and Ireland Noon today

Sunny

Mist

Fog

Sunny intervals

Hazy

Mostly cloudy

Overcast/dull

Sunny showers

Sunny and heavy showers

Light showers

Rain

Sleet

Light snow

Snow showers

Heavy snow

Ice

Thundery rain

Thundery showers

Temperature, °C

Wind speed, mph

Windy

35C

30

25

20

15

10

5

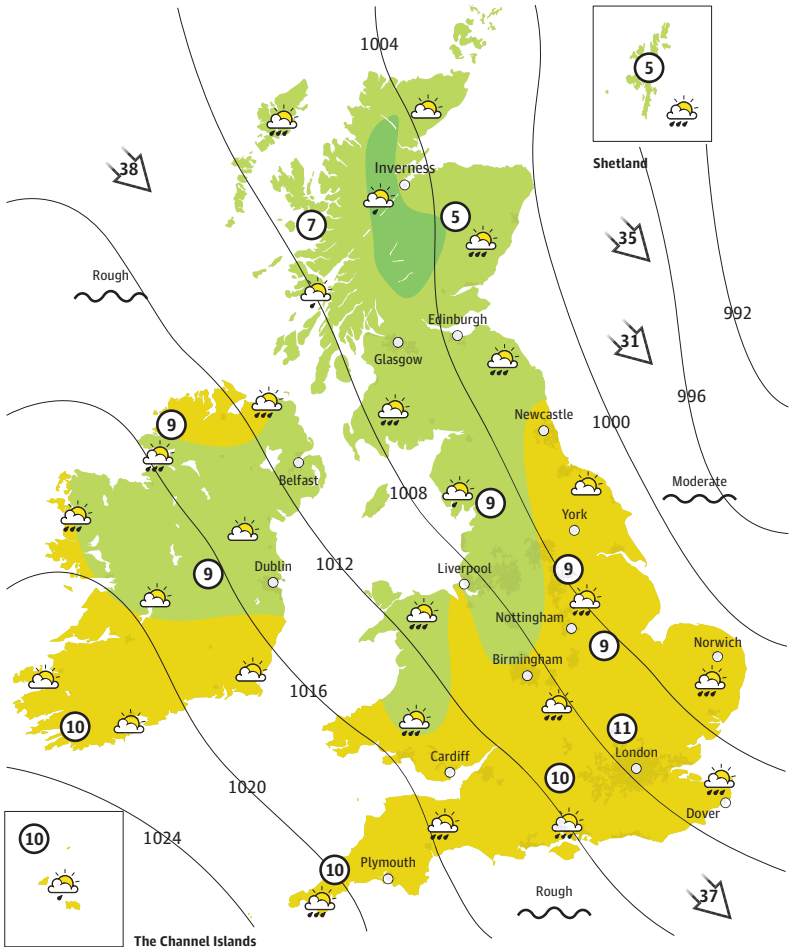
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-5

-10

-15

-20



Forecast

Low **4** High **10**

Tomorrow

Low **3** High **9**

Wednesday

Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO₂ readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

Latest	
19 Feb 2022	418.60
Weekly average	
13 Feb 2022	419.76
20 Feb 2021	416.59
20 Feb 2012	394.02
Pre-industrial base	280
Safe level	350

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

London

Lows and highs

4 11

Precipitation

60%

Air pollution

Low

Manchester

Lows and highs

4 9

Precipitation

65%

Air pollution

Low

Edinburgh

Lows and highs

3 10

Precipitation

5%

Air pollution

Low

Belfast

Lows and highs

6 9

Precipitation

55%

Air pollution

Low

Birmingham

Lows and highs

5 10

Precipitation

60%

Air pollution

Low

Brighton

Lows and highs

5 11

Precipitation

65%

Air pollution

Low

Bristol

Lows and highs

5 9

Precipitation

60%

Air pollution

Low

Cardiff

Lows and highs

7 10

Precipitation

60%

Air pollution

Low

Newcastle

Lows and highs

3 10

Precipitation

0%

Air pollution

Low

Penzance

Lows and highs

9 10

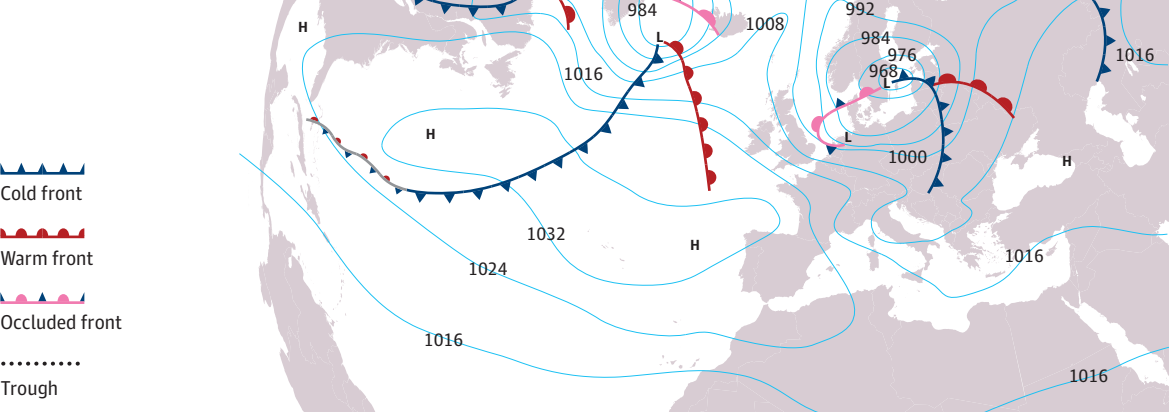
Precipitation

60%

Air pollution

Low

Atlantic front



High tides

Aberdeen	0411	4.0m	1617	4.2m
Avonmouth	1007	12.7m	2227	12.4m
Barrow	0206	8.9m	1422	9.1m
Belfast	0138	3.2m	1403	3.5m
Cobh	0819	4.0m	2035	3.9m
Cromer	0933	4.7m	2122	5.0m
Dover	0133	6.7m	1347	6.5m
Dublin	0215	3.8m	1436	4.0m
Galway	0757	5.0m	2026	4.7m
Greenock	0318	3.3m	1522	3.7m
Harwich	0217	3.8m	1449	3.8m
Holyhead	0059	5.3m	1314	5.6m
Hull	0917	7.1m	2120	7.4m
Leith	0530	5.3m	1739	5.4m
Liverpool	0146	9.0m	1359	9.1m

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

London Bridge	0435	6.9m	1657	6.8m
Lossiemouth	0235	3.7m	1440	3.9m
Milford Haven	0906	6.8m	2126	6.5m
Newquay	0759	6.8m	2020	6.5m
North Shields	0618	4.8m	1824	5.0m
Oban	0822	3.8m	2043	3.5m
Penzance	0730	5.4m	1949	5.1m
Plymouth	0840	5.3m	2058	5.0m
Portsmouth	0213	4.5m	1419	4.5m
Southport	0120	8.7m	1333	8.8m
Stornoway	0932	4.7m	2207	4.3m
Weymouth	0952	1.4m	2217	1.1m
Whitby	0653	5.2m	1900	5.5m
Wick	0205	3.2m	1414	3.4m
Workington	0209	7.9m	1423	8.2m

Sun & Moon

Sun rises 0702

Sun sets 1726

Moon rises 2324

Moon sets 0901

Last Quarter 23 Feb

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather ©2022

Lighting up

Belfast	1745 to 0731
Birm'ham	1731 to 0709
Brighton	1728 to 0700
Bristol	1737 to 0711
Carlisle	1730 to 0718
Cork	1759 to 0735
Dublin	1747 to 0729
Glasgow	1735 to 0726
Harlech	1740 to 0719
Inverness	1729 to 0729
London	1726 to 0700
M'chester	1731 to 0713
Newcastle	1726 to 0714
Norwich	1719 to 0657
Penzance	1750 to 0720

Starwatch

This week offers early risers a chance to see the silver moon next to the deep red star Antares. The chart shows the view looking south from London at 05:00 GMT on the morning of 24 February.

The moon will be low in the sky at just 12 degrees; Antares will be even lower, so find the clearest southern horizon you can. The moon will be more or less at its last quarter phase. Viewing Antares is usually associated with summer in the northern hemisphere, when it appears to twinkle in the evening sky. However, in the stiller winter air, the twinkling decreases and Antares can take on a strikingly beautiful appearance.

Its name derives from its colour and is Greek for “rival of Mars”, known in Greek as Ares. It is a gigantic red supergiant star. If it were magically to replace the sun, it would engulf everything to out beyond Mars.

Stuart Clark @DrStuClark

Around the world

Algiers	18	Lisbon	19
Ams'dam	8	Madrid	18
Athens	18	Malaga	19
Auckland	26	Melb'rne	18
B Aires	25	Mexico C	25
Bangkok	27	Miami	26
Barcelona	18	Milan	13
Basra	23	Mombasa	33
Beijing	2	Moscow	2
Berlin	6	Mumbai	31
Bermuda	18	N Orleans	23
Brussels	8	Nairobi	28
Budapest	8	New Delhi	25
C'hagen	6	New York	12
Cairo	21	Oslo	2
Cape Town	24	Paris	10
Chicago	5	Perth	32
Corfu	17	Prague	6
Dakar	26	Reykjavik	2
Dhaka	27	Rio de J	29
Dublin	9	Rome	15
Florence	15	Shanghai	8
Gibraltar	17	Singapore	31
H Kong	10	Stockh'm	2
Harare	27	Strasb'g	8
Helsinki	0	Sydney	27
Istanbul	13	Tel Aviv	18
Jo'burg	28	Tenerife	21
K Lumpur	32	Tokyo	7
K'mandu	16	Toronto	4
Kabul	12	Vancouv'r	6
Kingston	31	Vienna	10
Kolkata	29	Warsaw	8
L Angeles	16	Wash'ton	17
Lagos	33	Well'ton	20
Lima	23	Zurich	6

Winter Olympics

Sean Ingle on the winners and losers in Beijing

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Rugby union

Tuilagi powers up England's Six Nations bid

Page 36 →



Sport



▲ Damien Duff said he was terrified to take on the head coach role at the League of Ireland side Shelbourne
TOM MAHER/INPHO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Tolka Park charm

As Keane stays on sidelines, Duff takes his first bold step into management

Barry Glendenning



Towards the end of last week, as a certain high-profile Sky Sports pundit insisted it was “no big deal” that he had not returned to Sunderland to resume a management career that has been on the backburner for over a decade, one of his former international teammates took charge of his first senior game. A big story in his native Ireland, it flew largely under the radar elsewhere.

Eight years after he drew the curtain on his career in English football, Damien Duff might have questioned the wisdom of taking on the manager’s role at the League of Ireland side Shelbourne as he strode down the “wrong” side of a touchline he patrolled with such distinction as a player for Blackburn Rovers, Chelsea, Newcastle United and Fulham. He began his new life as a gaffer on a filthy Friday night in the Dublin suburb of Drumcondra, where Tolka Park was taking a pounding from the wind and rain.

For Duff, this maiden foray into management constituted an extremely big deal, the 42-year-old having openly admitted he was terrified by the prospect of taking over a famous old Dublin club that has in recent years fallen upon hard times.

“Am I scared? Absolutely,” he’d told reporters at his unveiling in early November. “Do I feel uncomfortable? Absolutely. Going into the Shels first-team role, is it going to be easy? No. Is it going to be comfortable? No. But it is going to give me 24/7 focus which is what I need. When I have an idle mind, like most people, it is not good for you.”

A two-time Premier League champion who

represented his country 100 times in a playing career bookended by spells at Shelbourne’s great Dublin rivals Shamrock Rovers, Duff had been keeping his mind ticking over since retirement in a variety of coaching roles. There were stints working behind the scenes at Celtic and the Republic of Ireland, as well as jobs whipping into shape underage sides at Rovers and his current club Shels.

Not literally whipping, although he found himself in a minor spot of bother some years ago when some of the parents of his charges at Rovers took exception to the gruelling nature of a training regime which subjected their children to 6.30am starts and double sessions up to five times a week. “I get slaughtered, but that’s a dinosaur mentality,” Duff said when the issue was raised during an appearance as a pundit on RTE. “You have to train five times a week.” More pertinently, the kids didn’t mind.

While Duff’s pedigree as a player should go a long way towards convincing his adult charges, many of them part-timers supplementing their incomes with second jobs, to buy into the kind of work ethic that might make even a taskmaster as notorious as Marcelo Bielsa blanch, the club they represent will be unable to afford the kind of back room personnel and recovery aids all English Premier League clubs take for granted.

Only a few days ago, Duff revealed his managerial duties have stretched to finding accommodation and part-time work for his many new recruits, while taking others to hospital in his car for scans. “I haven’t had one day where it’s been a clear easy ride,” he said more than three months after taking the job. “There’s always been some shit to deal with. More often than not, more than one piece of shit.”

A household name working in a league where most players and managers habitually go unrecognised by the wider public outside their own front doors, Duff is working on an extremely tight budget at a club that was once a powerhouse of Irish football but has spent much of the past decade yo-yoing in and out of the League of Ireland’s top flight. On a two-year contract, his immediate priority is keeping them in the Irish Premier League, even if he has already conceded “Shels will lose an awful lot of games” this season. Their first reverse, a 3-0 defeat at home to St Patrick’s Athletic in front of a capacity 4,100 crowd, is already on the board.

A deep thinker and perfectionist who demands the highest possible standards from his players on and off the pitch, Duff originally turned down the Shels job, because at the time he was offered it he was enjoying life on holiday with his family in the south of France and the thought of all the hassle it might entail simply did not appeal. Given a couple of days to mull over his decision, he soon changed his mind.

Despite being financially secure after a playing career in which he earned tens of millions, he felt compelled to demonstrate the courage of convictions - the importance of bravery and stepping out of one’s comfort zone - he was preaching to his own two children and the under-17s he was coaching at Shelbourne each day. “I am bottom of the tree,” he told reporters. “I am not the best manager in the league. I have an awful lot to prove. In my first session with the Shelbourne first team I will probably be using bits from José Mourinho from 20 years ago. I will never change. I am still energetic, emotional. The players will soon learn that I never try being anything I am not.”

While learning the gospel of José from 20 years ago is likely to be more beneficial to Shelbourne’s players than any teachings the Portuguese has espoused in recent years, Duff has insisted that “if there’s a bottle out of place, I’m not going to say I’ve had enough of Shelbourne Football Club”. This suggests he might also have absorbed a nugget or two regarding the kind of managerial missteps he ought not to take from his former international skipper Roy Keane.

‘Am I scared? Absolutely. Is it going to be easy? No. But it is going to give me 24/7 focus’

Football results

The week ahead



Fran Kirby may have a key role to play for England against Germany

Today

Rugby league
Betfred Championship
Dewsbury v Widnes (7.45pm) *PS1*

Tennis
ATP Chile Open
Santiago (to Sun)
ATP Dubai Championships
UAE (to Sat)
ATP Mexican Open
Acapulco (to Sat)
WTA Abierto de Guadalajara
Guadalajara, Mexico (to Sun)
WTA Qatar Total Open
Doha (to Sat)

Cricknet
Fourth Women's ODI
New Zealand v India, Queenstown (10pm) *BTS2*

Snooker
European Masters
Milton Keynes (to Sun)

Racing
Carlisle, Lingfield, Newcastle

Tomorrow

Football (7.45pm unless stated)
Uefa Champions League
Last 16: First leg
Chelsea v Lille (8pm) *BTS2*;
Villarreal v Juventus (8pm) *BTS3*
Sky Bet Championship
Bristol City v Coventry; Hull v Barnsley; Middlesbrough v West Brom; Preston v Nottingham Forest; Reading v Birmingham (8pm); Swansea v Bournemouth *SSAr*
Sky Bet League One
Bolton v Lincoln City (8pm); Cambridge Utd v Plymouth; Charlton v MK Dons; Crewe v Oxford Utd; Doncaster v Accrington Stanley; Fleetwood v Sheffield Wed; Gillingham v AFC Wimbledon; Ipswich v Cheltenham; Rotherham v Morecambe; Shrewsbury v Portsmouth; Sunderland v Burton Albion; Wycombe v Wigan
Sky Bet League Two
Bradford v Harrogate; Colchester v Hartlepool; Leyton Orient v Bristol Rovers; Rochdale v Port Vale; Scunthorpe v Northampton; Swindon v Walsall
Vanarama National League
Aldershot v Dover; Barnet v King's Lynn; Chesterfield v Wrexham; Dag & Red v Woking; Eastleigh v Southend; Maidenhead Utd v Yeovil; Notts County v Halifax; Solihull Moors v Wealdstone; Torquay v Boreham Wood; Weymouth v Bromley
Cinch Scottish Premiership
Partick v Morton
Cinch Scottish League One
Falkirk v Peterhead
Cinch Scottish League Two
Kelty Hearts v Cowdenbeath

Racing
Market Rasen, Southwell, Taunton

Wednesday

Football (7.45pm unless stated)
Uefa Champions League
Last 16: First leg Atlético Madrid v Manchester Utd (8pm) *BTS2*;
Benfica v Ajax (8pm) *BTS3*
Premier League
Burnley v Tottenham (7.30pm); Liverpool v Leeds; Watford v Crystal Palace (7.30pm)
Sky Bet Championship
Derby v Millwall; Fulham v Peterborough; Huddersfield v Cardiff; QPR v Blackpool; Sheffield Utd v Blackburn; Stoke v Luton
Cinch Scottish Premiership
Dundee v St Mirren
Women's Arnold Clark Cup
England v Germany (7.30pm) *ITV4*;
Spain v Canada (2.30pm) *ITV4*

Cricknet
First ODI
Bangladesh v Afghanistan, Mirpur (5am)
Fifth Women's ODI
New Zealand v India, Queenstown (10pm)

Racing
Doncaster, Kempton Park, Ludlow, Newcastle

Thursday

Football (7.45pm unless stated)
Uefa Europa League
Knockout play-offs: Second leg
Braga (0) v Sheriff (2) (8pm); Dinamo Zagreb (1) v Sevilla (3) (5.45pm); Lazio (1) v Porto (2) (5.45pm); Napoli (1) v Barcelona (1) (8pm) *BTESPN*; Olympiakos (1) v Atalanta (2) (5.45pm); Rangers (4) v Borussia Dortmund (2) (8pm) *BTS2*; Real Betis (3) v Zenit St Petersburg (2) (8pm); Real Sociedad (2) v RB Leipzig (2) (5.45pm)
Uefa Europa Conference League
Preliminary knockout play-offs: Second leg Bodo/Glimt (3) v Celtic (1) (5.45pm) *BTESPN*; Karabakh (1) v Marseille (3) (5.45pm); Maccabi Tel-Aviv (0) v PSV Eindhoven (1) (5.45pm); Paok (0) v Midtjylland (1) (8pm); Partizan Belgrade (1) v Sparta Prague (0) (5.45pm); Randers (1) v Leicester (4) (5.45pm) *BTS3*; Slavia Prague (3) v Fenerbahce (2) (8pm); Vitesse (1) v Rapid Vienna (2) (8pm)
Premier League
Arsenal v Wolves *Prime*
Rugby league
Betfred Super League
Leeds v Catalans Dragons (8pm); Wigan v Huddersfield (8pm)
Cricknet
Second Test (first day of five)
New Zealand v South Africa, Christchurch (10pm)
First T20 international
India v Sri Lanka, Lucknow (1.30pm)
Golf
Honda Classic
Palm Beach, US (to Sun)
Racing
Huntingdon, Newcastle, Sedgfield, Southwell

Friday

Football (7.45pm unless stated)
Premier League
Southampton v Norwich (8pm) *SSME*
Cinch Scottish Championship
Hamilton v Inverness *CT BBCi*
Cinch Scottish League Two
Edinburgh City v Cowdenbeath
Rugby union
Gallagher Premiership
Bristol v Wasps (7.45pm); Sale v London Irish (7.45pm); Worcester Warriors v Harlequins (7.45pm)
United Championship
Leinster v Lions (7.35pm); Zebre v Bulls (5.30pm)
Rugby league
Betfred Super League
Hull KR v Castleford (8pm); St Helens v Wakefield (8pm)
Cricknet
Second ODI
Bangladesh v Afghanistan, Mirpur (5am)
Racing
Exeter, Lingfield, Warwick, Wolverhampton

Saturday

Football (3pm unless stated)
Premier League
Brentford v Newcastle; Brighton v Aston Villa; Crystal Palace v Burnley; Everton v Manchester City (5.30pm) *SSME*; Leeds v Tottenham (12.30pm) *BTS1*; Manchester Utd v Watford
Sky Bet Championship
Bournemouth v Stoke; Barnsley v Middlesbrough; Birmingham v Huddersfield; Blackburn v QPR (12.30pm) *SSF*; Blackpool v Reading; Cardiff v Fulham; Coventry v Preston; Luton v Derby; Millwall v Sheffield Utd; Nottingham Forest v Bristol City; Peterborough v Hull
Sky Bet League One
AFC Wimbledon v Doncaster; Accrington Stanley v Wycombe; Burton Albion v Shrewsbury; Cheltenham v Crewe; Lincoln City v Gillingham; MK Dons v Bolton; Morecambe v Ipswich; Oxford Utd v Cambridge Utd; Plymouth v Rotherham; Portsmouth v Fleetwood; Sheffield Wed v Charlton; Wigan v Sunderland
Sky Bet League Two
Barrow v Harrogate; Bradford City v Mansfield; Bristol Rovers v Exeter; Colchester v Oldham; Crawley v Forest Green; Leyton Orient v Carlisle; Newport

County v Tranmere; Port Vale v Stevenage; Rochdale v Northampton; Sutton Utd v Scunthorpe; Swindon v Salford City; Walsall v Hartlepool
Vanarama National League
Altrincham v Dag & Red; Boreham Wood v Eastleigh; Chesterfield v Yeovil (5.20pm) *BTS1*; Dover v Grimsby; Halifax v Barnet; King's Lynn v Maidenhead Utd; Southend v Solihull Moors; Stockport County v Weymouth; Wealdstone v Torquay; Woking v Notts County; Wrexham v Aldershot
Cinch Scottish Premiership
Aberdeen v Dundee Utd; Dundee v Livingston; Ross County v St Johnstone; St Mirren v Hearts
Cinch Scottish Championship
Ayr v Queen of the South; Dunfermline v Kilmarnock; Morton v Arbroath; Raith v Partick
Cinch Scottish League One
Airdrieonians v Clyde; Alloa v Cove Rangers; Falkirk v East Fife; Peterhead v Dumbarton; Queen's Park v Montrose
Cinch Scottish League Two
Elgin v Stirling Albion; Kelty Hearts v Annan Athletic; Stenhousemuir v Forfar; Stranraer v Albion Rovers
Rugby union
Guinness Six Nations
England v Wales (4.45pm); Scotland v France (2.15pm)
Gallagher Premiership
Leicester v Gloucester (3pm); Newcastle v Bath (3pm)
United Championship
Benetton Treviso v Sharks (3.05pm); Connacht v Stormers (1pm)
RFU Championship
Coventry v London Scottish (3pm); Ealing v Doncaster (3pm); Hartpury v Amphilhll (2.30pm)
Women's Allianz Premier 15s
Darlington MP v Harlequins (2pm); Exeter v Worcester (2pm); Loughborough v Gloucester-Hartpury (2pm); Sale v Wasps (3pm)
Rugby league
Betfred Super League
Hull FC v Salford (3pm); Toulouse v Warrington (5pm)
Betfred Challenge Cup
Fourth round Batley v Royal Navy (1pm); Doncaster v Whitehaven (2pm); Halifax v Featherstone (3pm); Hunslet Parkside v Sheffield (tbc); London Broncos v Bradford (3pm); North Wales v Hunslet (2.30pm); Rochdale v Barrow (3pm); Workington v Dewsbury (2pm); York v Newcastle (3pm)
Cricknet
Second T20 international
India v Sri Lanka, Dharamsala (1.30pm)
Racing
Chelmsford, Chepstow, Kempton Park, Lingfield, Newcastle

Sunday

Football
Carabao EFL Cup
Final
Chelsea v Liverpool (4.30pm) *SSME*
Premier League
West Ham v Wolves (2pm) *SSME*
Cinch Scottish Premiership
Hibernian v Celtic (midday) *SSME*; Rangers v Motherwell (3pm)
Scottish Lowland League
Celtic B v Stirling University
Women's FA Cup
Fifth round Charlton v Everton (1pm); Durham v Birmingham (2pm); Ipswich v Southampton (2pm); Liverpool v Arsenal (midday); Manchester Utd v Manchester City (2pm) *BBC2*; Reading v West Ham (2pm); West Brom v Coventry (2pm)
FA Women's Championship
London City v Bristol City (2pm)
Rugby union
Guinness Six Nations
Ireland v Italy (3pm)
Gallagher Premiership
Northampton v Exeter (1pm)
RFU Championship
Cornish Pirates v Jersey (2pm); Nottingham v Bedford (3pm)
Women's Allianz Premier 15s
Bristol v Saracens (2.30pm)
Cricknet
Third T20 international
India v Sri Lanka, Dharamsala (1.30pm)
Racing
Fontwell Park, Hereford

Premier League

	P	Home					Away					GD	Pts	Next three games
		W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A			
1 Manchester City	26	10	1	2	36	9	10	2	1	27	8	+46	63	Everton (a) 26/02, Man Utd (h) 06/03, Crystal Palace (a) 14/03
2 Liverpool	25	9	3	0	30	7	8	3	2	34	13	+44	57	Leeds (h) 23/02, West Ham (h) 05/03, Brighton (a) 12/03
3 Chelsea	25	6	5	1	27	10	8	3	2	22	8	+31	50	Burnley (a) 05/03, Newcastle (h) 13/03, Norwich (a) 19/03
4 Manchester United	26	7	2	4	21	16	6	5	2	23	18	+10	46	Watford (h) 26/02, Man City (a) 06/03, Tottenham (h) 12/03
5 West Ham	26	6	3	4	24	19	6	3	4	21	15	+11	42	Wolves (h) 27/02, Liverpool (a) 05/03, Aston Villa (h) 13/3
6 Arsenal	23	8	2	2	20	9	5	1	5	16	17	+10	42	Wolves (h) 24/02, Watford (a) 06/03, Leicester (h) 13/03
7 Wolves	24	5	2	5	10	10	7	2	3	13	8	+5	40	Arsenal (a) 24/02, West Ham (a) 27/02, Crystal Palace (h) 05/03
8 Tottenham	23	7	1	4	18	15	5	2	4	13	16	0	39	Burnley (a) 23/02, Leeds (a) 26/02, Everton (h) 07/03
9 Brighton	25	3	5	4	10	14	4	7	2	15	14	-3	33	Aston Villa (h) 26/02, Newcastle (a) 05/03, Liverpool (h) 12/03
10 Southampton	25	4	7	1	16	10	3	4	6	16	27	-5	32	Norwich (h) 25/02, Aston Villa (a) 05/03, Newcastle (h) 10/03
11 Leicester	23	5	3	4	21	18	2	3	6	16	25	-6	27	Burnley (a) 01/03, Leeds (h) 05/03, Arsenal (a) 13/03
12 Aston Villa	24	4	3	5	20	20	4	0	8	11	17	-6	27	Brighton (a) 26/02, Southampton (h) 05/03, Southampton (a) 10/03
13 Crystal Palace	25	4	5	4	21	16	1	6	5	11	20	-4	26	Watford (a) 23/02, Burnley (h) 26/02, Wolves (a) 05/03
14 Brentford	26	4	2	7	14	17	2	4	7	13	25	-15	24	Newcastle (h) 26/02, Norwich (a) 05/03, Burnley (h) 12/03
15 Leeds	24	3	4	5	15	21	2	4	6	14	29	-21	23	Liverpool (a) 23/02, Tottenham (h) 26/02, Leicester (a) 05/03
16 Everton	23	5	1	5	18	17	1	3	8	10	23	-12	22	Man City (h) 26/02, Tottenham (a) 07/03, Wolves (h) 13/03
17 Newcastle	24	3	6	4	18	24	1	4	6	8	21	-19	22	Brentford (a) 26/02, Brighton (h) 05/03, Southampton (a) 10/03
18 Watford	24	2	1	9	11	27	3	2	7	13	16	-19	18	Crystal Palace (h) 23/02, Man Utd (a) 26/02, Arsenal (h) 06/03
19 Burnley	22	1	6	3	9	10	1	5	6	11	19	-9	17	Tottenham (h) 23/02, Crystal Palace (a) 26/02, Leicester (h) 01/03
20 Norwich	25	2	3	8	8	25	2	2	8	7	28	-38	17	Southampton (a) 25/02, Brentford (h) 05/03, Leeds (a) 13/03

Europe

LIGUE 1 <i>(top 11)</i>	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Paris St-Germain	25	18	5	2	53	22	+31	59
Marseille	24	13	7	4	38	21	+17	46
Nice	25	14	4	7	37	21	+16	45
Strasbourg	25	12	6	7	48	31	+17	42
Rennes	25	12	4	9	47	23	+14	40
Monaco	25	10	8	7	38	27	+11	38
Nantes	25	11	5	9	34	29	+5	38
Lyon	25	10	9	6	34	31	+3	38
Montpellier	25	11	4	10	39	34	+5	37
Lens	25	10	7	8	40	36	+4	37
Lille	25	9	9	7	32	35	-3	36

Bordeaux 1 Monaco 1; Lens 1 Lyon 1; Lorient 0 Montpellier 1; Marseille L Clermont L; Nantes 3 Paris St-Germain 1; Nice 1 Angers 0; Reims 1 Brest 1; Rennes 4 Troyes 1; St-Etienne 2 Strasbourg 2. **Friday** Lille 0 Metz 0.

BUNDESLIGA <i>(top 11)</i>	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Bayern Munich	23	18	1	4	74	26	+48	55
Borussia Dortmund	23	16	1	6	63	36	+27	49
Bayer Leverkusen	23	12	5	6	60	39	+21	41
Hoffenheim	23	11	4	8	45	35	+10	37
RB Leipzig	23	11	4	8	49	28	+21	37
Freiburg	23	10	7	6	36	26	+10	37
Cologne	23	9	8	6	35	37	-2	35
Mainz	23	10	4	9	34	26	+8	34
Union Berlin	23	9	7	7	29	31	-2	34
Eintracht Frankfurt	23	8	7	8	33	35	-2	31
Bochum	23	8	5	10	25	33	-8	29

Arminia Bielefeld 1 Union Berlin 0; Augsburg 1 Freiburg 2; Bayern Munich 4 Greuther Fürth 1; Borussia Dortmund 6 Borussia M'gladbach 0; Cologne 1 Eintracht Frankfurt 0; Hertha Berlin 1 RB Leipzig 6; VfB Stuttgart 1 Bochum 1; Wolfsburg 1 Hoffenheim 2. **Friday** Mainz 3 Bayer Leverkusen 2.

Scotland

CINCH PREMIERSHIP	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Celtic	27	21	3	3	60	17	+43	66
Rangers	27	19	6	2	56	22	+34	63
Hearts	27	12	7	8	36	29	+7	43
Hibernian	27	9	7	11	28	30	-2	34
Dundee Utd	27	9	7	11	22	28	-6	34
Motherwell	27	9	7	11	28	40	-12	34
St Mirren	26	7	12	7	26	35	-9	33
Aberdeen	27	8	7	12	32	34	-2	31
Livingston	27	8	7	12	26	34	-8	31
Ross County	27	6	9	12	38	46	-8	27
St Johnstone	27	5	8	14	17	32	-15	23
Dundee	26	5	6	15	23	45	-22	21

Celtic (2) 3 **Dundee** Mullen 26 Sweeney 60

Dundee Utd Graham 29	(1) 1	Rangers Ayodele-Aribo 76	(0) 1
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Hibernian Doyle-Hayes 50 78 14,149

(0) 2	Ross County	(0) 0
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Livingston Anderson 55 4,228

(0) 1	St Mirren Kiltie 78	(0) 1
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Motherwell O'Hara 68 5,171

(0) 1	Aberdeen Besuijen 34	(1) 1
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St Johnstone Crawford 1 McCart 56

(1) 2	Hearts Atkinson 6 4,409	(1) 1
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LEADING GOALSCORERS	League	Total
Morelos Rangers	11	17
Furuhashi Celtic	8	16
Abada Celtic	9	14
Boyce Hearts	8	13

CINCH CHAMPIONSHIP	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Arbroath	25	12	10	3	38	18	+20	46
Kilmarnock	26	14	4	8	34	19	+15	46
Inverness CT	26	10	9	7	34	25	+9	39
Raith	26	9	11	6	34	30	+4	38
Partick	22	10	7	5	37	22	+15	37
Hamilton	26	7	9	10	28	40	-12	30
Ayr	26	7	8	11	25	39	-14	29
Morton	25	6	9	10	29	35	-6	27
Dunfermline	25	4	11	10	24	40	-16	23
Queen of the South	25	4	8	13	25	40	-15	20

Hamilton 1 Morton 0; Inverness CT 1 Ayr 2; Kilmarnock 3 Raith 0; Queen of the South 0 Arbroath 0. **Friday** Dunfermline P Partick P.

CINCH LEAGUE ONE	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Cove Rangers	26	16	7	3	49	22	+27	55
Airdrieonians	26	15	5	6	45	29	+16	50
Montrose	26	11	11	4	41	25	+16	44
Queen's Park	25	7	15	3	39	25	+14	36
Falkirk	25	9	5	11	36	38	-2	32
Clyde	26	7	10	9	31	43	-12	31
Alloa	26	7	7	12	33	44	-11	28
Dumbarton	26	7	5	14	37	52	-15	26
Peterhead	24	6	6	12	29	35	-6	24
East Fife	26	4	7	15	25	52	-27	19

Cove Rangers 2 Falkirk 0; Dumbarton 1 Alloa 2; East Fife 1 Queen's Park 1; Montrose 1 Clyde 1; Peterhead 0 Airdrieonians 1.

CINCH LEAGUE TWO	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Kelty Hearts	23	16	4	3	50	22	+28	52
Forfar	25	13	7	5	46	27	+19	46
Annan Athletic	25	13	5	7	42	29	+13	44
Edinburgh City	25	10	6	9	34	37	-3	36
Stenhousemuir	24	9	6	9	35	37	-2	33
Stranraer	26	8						

Sky Bet Championship

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Fulham	31	19	7	5	79	28	+51	64
Bournemouth	30	17	7	6	49	26	+23	58
Blackburn	32	15	9	8	45	33	+12	54
QPR	32	15	8	9	47	37	+10	53
Huddersfield	33	14	11	8	42	35	+7	53
Sheffield Utd	31	14	8	9	43	33	+10	50
Middlesbrough	31	14	7	10	39	31	+8	49
Luton	31	13	9	9	43	36	+7	48
Nottingham Forest	31	13	8	10	43	33	+10	47
Coventry	31	13	8	10	40	36	+4	47
West Brom	32	12	10	10	34	28	+6	46
Preston	33	11	12	10	37	38	-1	45
Stoke	31	12	8	11	40	34	+6	44
Millwall	31	11	10	10	33	33	0	43
Blackpool	32	11	9	12	35	38	-3	42
Bristol City	33	11	7	15	44	59	-15	40
Swansea	31	10	8	13	32	43	-11	38
Birmingham	33	9	10	14	39	51	-12	37
Cardiff	32	10	6	16	39	51	-12	36
Peterborough	31	5	6	20	23	61	-38	21
Hull	33	9	7	17	27	37	-10	34
Reading**	32	9	5	18	39	62	-23	26
Derby*	32	10	12	10	33	35	-2	21
Barnsley	31	3	8	20	19	46	-27	17

*Derby docked 21pts; **Reading docked 6pts

Blackburn (match postponed due to adverse weather)	(-) P	Millwall	(-) P
Bristol City Seameny 68	(1) 2	Middlesbrough Crooks 90 20,148	(0) 1
Cardiff Bagan 49 19,025	(0) 1	Blackpool Ekpiteta 11	(1) 1
Coventry Hyam 90	(0) 1	Barnsley 17,104	(0) 0
Derby Sibley 90	(0) 1	Peterborough 30,251	(0) 0
Fulham Decordova-Reid 83 19,001	(0) 1	Huddersfield Ward 31 Holmes 43pen	(2) 2
Luton Jerome 55 Campbell 83	(0) 2	West Brom 10,021	(0) 0
Preston Johnson 57 Archer 74 12,817	(0) 2	Reading João 2 19 Swift 55	(2) 3

QPR Chair 75 14,945	(0) 1	Hull Forss 26	(1) 1
Sheffield Utd Gibbs-White 14 78 Baldock 18 Sharp 38	(3) 4	Swansea 26,654	(0) 0
Stoke Campbell 25 52 23,502	(1) 2	Birmingham James 12 Gardner 58	(1) 2
Bournemouth (Friday)	(-) P	Nottingham Forest (match postponed due to adverse weather)	(-) P

LEADING GOALSCORERS		
	League	Total
Mitrovic Fulham	31	31
Brereton Díaz Blackburn	20	20
Solanke Bournemouth	19	20
Jakobsen Preston	12	16
Weimann Bristol City	16	16
Piroe Swansea	12	14

Other football

WOMEN'S ARNOLD CLARK CUP
Canada 1 Germany 1; England 0 Spain 0

WOMEN'S PINATAR CUP
Semi-finals Poland 1 Hungary 2; Wales 0 Belgium 0 (Belgium won 3-1 on pens)

VANARAMA NATIONAL LEAGUE									
	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	
Stockport County	29	19	4	6	59	27	+32	61	
Chesterfield	28	15	10	3	52	27	+25	55	
Boreham Wood	25	15	7	3	36	17	+19	52	
Halifax	26	15	5	6	41	21	+20	50	
Bromley	27	15	5	7	43	31	+12	50	
Solihull Moors	27	14	7	6	44	25	+19	49	
Wrexham	27	14	7	6	44	27	+17	49	
Notts County	26	14	6	6	49	29	+20	48	
Grimsby	28	14	4	10	42	29	+13	46	
Dag & Red	27	13	3	11	49	37	+12	42	
Torquay	28	12	5	11	44	43	+1	41	
Southend	27	11	5	11	30	37	-7	38	
Yeovil	27	10	7	10	26	27	-1	37	
Eastleigh	28	9	6	13	28	41	-13	33	
Woking	28	10	2	16	42	44	-2	32	
Wealdstone	27	8	7	12	28	39	-11	31	
Barnet	28	8	7	13	34	55	-21	31	
Aldershot	28	8	6	14	32	44	-12	30	
Tring	29	8	6	15	40	54	-14	30	
Maidenhead Utd	26	8	6	12	30	47	-17	30	
Weymouth	28	5	6	17	28	51	-23	21	
King's Lynn	26	4	3	19	24	51	-27	15	
Dover	28	1	4	23	21	63	-42	-5	

Altrincham P Weymouth P; Chesterfield 2 Solihull Moors 3; Halifax P Dover P; King's Lynn P Bromley P; Maidenhead Utd 2 Boreham Wood 0; Notts County 2 Eastleigh 0; Stockport County 1 Woking 0; Torquay 2

Sky Bet League One

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Rotherham	32	21	6	5	58	19	+39	69
Wigan	30	19	6	5	53	28	+25	63
Milton Keynes Dons	33	17	9	7	53	35	+18	60
Oxford Utd	33	16	8	9	60	41	+19	56
Plymouth	31	16	8	7	54	36	+18	56
Wycombe	32	15	10	7	52	40	+12	55
Sunderland	33	16	7	10	57	46	+11	55
Sheff Wed	32	15	10	7	45	35	+10	55
Ipswich	33	14	9	10	52	38	+14	51
Bolton	33	14	6	13	52	44	+8	48
Portsmouth	30	12	8	10	38	31	+7	44
Burton Albion	33	12	7	14	41	44	-3	43
Accrington Stanley	32	12	7	13	41	49	-8	43
Cambridge Utd	32	10	11	11	42	45	-3	41
Cheltenham	32	9	13	10	43	54	-11	40
Charlton	32	11	6	15	41	43	-2	39
Lincoln City	31	9	8	14	36	41	-5	35
Shrewsbury	32	8	10	14	28	33	-5	34
Fleetwood Town	31	7	11	13	44	53	-9	32
AFC Wimbledon	32	6	13	13	37	51	-14	31
Morecambe	32	7	9	16	43	61	-18	30
Gillingham	33	5	11	17	26	55	-29	26
Doncaster	34	7	4	23	24	66	-42	25
Crewe	32	5	7	20	26	58	-32	22

Bolton Bödvarsson 36 Afolayan 56 Charles 67, Bakayoko 87	(1) 4	AFC Wimbledon 14,537	(0) 0
Cambridge Utd Smith 66 Hoolahan 90	(0) 2	Accrington Stanley 5,602	(0) 0
Charlton 14,029	(0) 0	Oxford Utd Taylor 21 28 Baldock 54, Brannagan 83	(2) 4
Crewe (match postponed due to a waterlogged pitch)	(-) P	Portsmouth Paterson 70, Berahino 80 11,217	(-) P
Doncaster Gardner 45pen	(1) 1	Sheffield Wed Bannan 83	(0) 3
Fleetwood (match postponed de to a waterlogged pitch)	(-) P	Lincoln City Garrick 46 Jephcott 7 6pen	(-) P
Gillingham 5,197	(0) 0	Plymouth Garrick 46 Jephcott 7 6pen	(0) 2
Ipswich Jackson 1, Burns 62 Celina 78	(1) 3	Burton Albion 20,516	(0) 0
Shrewsbury (match postponed due to adverse weather)	(-) P	Morecambe Eisa 48 Wickham 76	(-) P
Sunderland Stewart 59 30,451	(0) 1	MK Dons May 3 53 71 81 Etete 66 5,574	(0) 2
Wycombe Obita 26 31 Hanlan 33 Vokes 68 69	(3) 5	Cheltenham Etete 66 5,574	(1) 5
Rotherham Rathbone 75 10,588	(0) 1	Wigan Humphrys 28	(1) 1

LEADING GOALSCORERS		
	League	Total
Stockton Morecambe	18	21
Stewart Sunderland	19	19
May Cheltenham	15	18
Smith Rotherham	16	18
Taylor Oxford Utd	16	18
Hardie Plymouth	12	15

Sky Bet League Two

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Forest Green	31	19	9	3	61	25	+36	66
Tranmere	33	16	8	9	34	23	+11	56
Northampton	31	16	7	8	38	25	+13	55
Exeter	30	14	11	5	45	30	+15	53
Sutton Utd	32	14	9	9	46	38	+8	51
Mansfield	30	14	8	8	40	33	+7	50
Swindon	31	13	10	8	49	38	+11	49
Newport County	32	13	10	9	50	42	+8	49
Port Vale	29	12	9	8	42	30	+12	45
Salford City	31	12	8	11	35	29	+6	44
Bristol Rovers	30	12	8	10	42	39	+3	44
Hartlepool	31	11	8	12	31	39	-8	41
Bradford City	32	9	13	10	36	38	-2	40
Crawley	30	11	7	12	37	41	-4	40
Harrogate	30	10	8	12	47	48	-1	38
Walsall	31	9	8	14	32	39	-7	35
Rochdale	29	7	13	9	37	39	-2	34
Leyton Orient	29	7	12	10	38	29	+9	33
Stevenage	33	7	12	14	30	50	-20	33
Barrow	31	7	10	14	30	39	-9	31
Colchester	31	7	10	14	28	44	-16	31
Oldham	30	7	8	15	30	46	-16	29
Carlisle	31	6	10	15	23	45	-22	28
Scunthorpe	32	4	10	18	23	55	-32	22

Carlisle 4,345	(0) 0	Swindon McKirdy 17 Davison 55 Barry 57	(1) 3
Exeter (match postponed due to adverse weather)	(-) P	Barrow Miller 12	(-) P
Forest Green 3,122	(0) 0	Walsall Miller 12	(1) 1
Harrogate (match postponed due to adverse weather)	(-) P	Leyton Orient Kizzi 3	(-) P
Hartlepool Crawford 51 5,487	(0) 1	Sutton Utd Pask 68og	(1) 1
Newport County Telford 82pen 3,956	(0) 1	Mansfield Pask 68og	(0) 1
Northampton Horsfall 16 Hoskins 49 Ashley-Seal 90	(1) 3	Colchester 5,309	(0) 0
Oldham Hope 20 Keillor-Dunn 24	(2) 2	Bradford City 7,716	(0) 0
Salford City (match postponed due to adverse weather)	(-) P	Crawley Kizzi 3	(-) P
Scunthorpe Onariase 13 2,548	(1) 1	Rochdale Kelly 51 Taylor 83	(0) 2
Stevenage 3,538	(0) 0	Bristol Rovers Finley 36 E Anderson 50 H Anderson 54 Collins 74	(1) 4
Tranmere Hawkes 50 7,456	(0) 1	Port Vale Proctor 90	(0) 1

LEADING GOALSCORERS		
	League	Total
Telford Newport County	22	22
Stevens Forest Green	20	21
Matt Forest Green	17	18
Drinan Leyton Orient	10	13
Jay Exeter	10	13
McKirdy Swindon	12	13

Other results

Winter Olympics

BOBSLEIGH
4-man: 1 F Friedrich, T Mings, C Bauer, A Schüller (Ger) 3min 54.30sec; 2 J Lochner, F Bauer, C Weber, C Rasp (Ger) 3:54.67; 3 J Kripps, R Sommer, C Stones, B Coakwell (Can) 3:55.09.

ALPINE SKIING
Mixed team: Parallel big: 1 Austria; 2 Germany; 3 Norway
CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING
Women: 30km mass start: 1 T Johaug (Nor) 1hr 24min 54.0sec; 2 J Diggins (US) 1:26:37.3; 3 K Niskanen (Fin) 1:27:27.3.

CURLING
Women: Gold medal game Great Britain 10 Japan 3

ICE HOCKEY
Men: Gold medal game Finland 2 ROC 1

Rugby union

GALLAGHER PREMIERSHIP									
	P	W	D	L	F	A	B	Pts	
Leicester	16	14	0	2	472	283	9	65	
Saracens	16	10	1	5	529	296	12	54	
Harlequins	16	9	0	7	392	357	12	48	
Gloucester	15	9	1	5	392	343	9	47	
Exeter	16	9	0	7	339	296	9	45	
London Irish	16	7	3	6	418	414	11	45	
Sale	16	8	1	7	365	330	7	43	
Wasps	16	8	0	8	419	407	11	43	
Northampton	15	8	0	7	424	374	9	41	
Bristol	15	5	0	10	327	407	8	28	
Newcastle	15	5	1	9	239	364	3	25	
Worcester	16	4	1	11	302	540	7	25	
Bath	16	2	0	14	271	478	5	15	

Sport Rugby union

▼ Manu Tuilagi should provide balance in England's midfield
JOHN SIBLEY/REUTERS

Fit-again Tuilagi ready to storm back for England

Dynamic centre hopeful of playing against Wales in what would be his first Six Nations match in 721 days

Robert Kitson

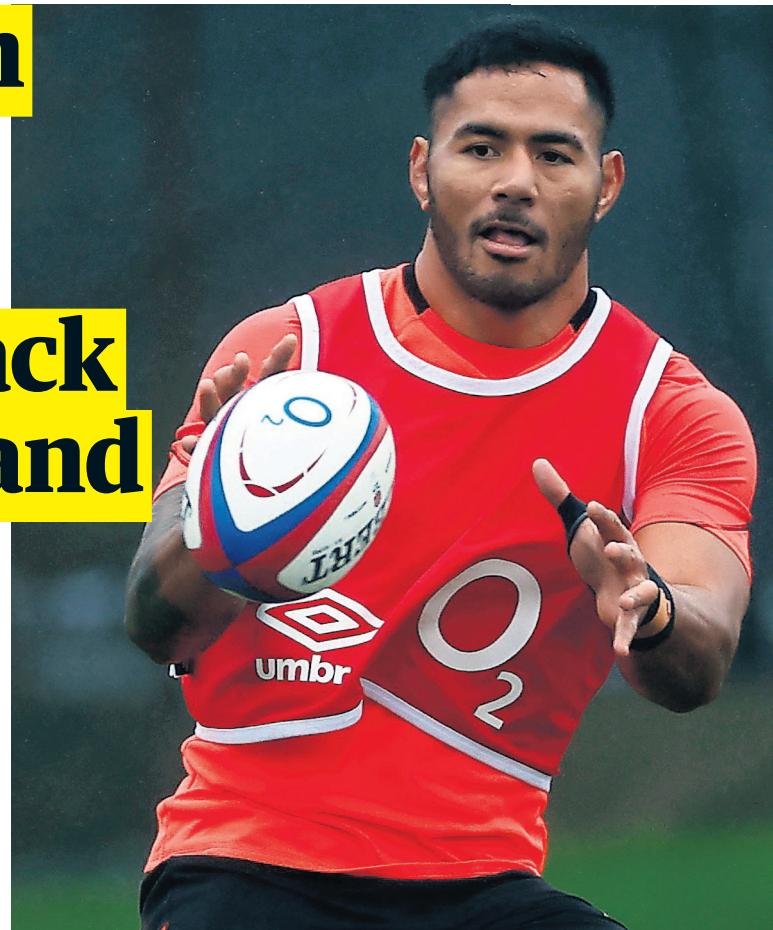
If there is one man England are keen to see back fit and singing the anthems at Twickenham, it is Manu Tuilagi. With the possible exception of Storm Eunice, few are better equipped to flatten anything in their path and the red-rose management are advising Wales to batten down the hatches when they head to Twickenham this weekend.

With their opening-round defeat in Scotland having, in effect, left England needing to win all their remaining games to be title contenders, the news that Tuilagi is back fully fit and firing has been a tonic for the troops. Barring any mishaps in training this week, he is set to feature in a Six Nations fixture for the first time in 721 days.

His last championship appearance was against Wales nearly two years ago, when he scored a try and then collected a red card in a breathless 33-30 home win. Now, having proved his fitness for Sale Sharks following the hamstring injury he suffered while scoring his fine early try against the world champions, South Africa, in November, he has impressed the England management in training and poses a clear threat to Welsh ambitions.

According to England's defence coach, Anthony Seibold, the Tuilagi effect is significant whether or not England are in possession. "On both sides of the ball he's a powerful weapon," says Seibold, who is no stranger to big physical units from his time in Australian rugby league. "That's been him for the last 11 years, carrying the ball. But just as important, if not more so, his contact around the defence is very good."

"You saw the first couple of actions against Quins the other day. He played the last 30 minutes and his first two or three shots in contact were dominant ones. He brings a physical presence, there's no doubt about that. He also brings a lot of experience and smarts in terms of what we're trying to do."



If that makes the 30-year-old a "big in" from the management's perspective, the centre's experience and popularity are also valuable at a time when England are rebuilding. "He's got that personality and character that people get a lot of confidence from," says Seibold. "Manu is a real glue [player], there's no doubt. He's a really enjoyable guy to coach."

All that said, Tuilagi's record against Wales is not as imposing as it might be. In five previous Six Nations encounters he has finished on the winning side only twice, with one of those coming as a replacement. He has never won in Cardiff in an England jersey and, including World Cup warm-ups, has registered two tries in eight fixtures.

Those figures also reflect the long, injury-enforced gaps in Tuilagi's career, which at one stage prevented him from starting a Test for England for almost five years. His value to England, even so, remains high as Eddie Jones seeks to find a straight-running accomplice for Marcus Smith to enhance England's midfield balance.

Elliot Daly and Joe Marchant have filled in alongside Henry Slade against Scotland and Italy respectively but England's inability to kick on in the second half in Rome highlighted the fact they are a work in progress. "We know we need to improve, there is no doubt about that," says Seibold. "We weren't infatuated by the scoreboard or parts of the

'Manu's got that personality and character that people get a lot of confidence from'

performance against Italy. To be the team we want to become, we need to be consistent. Regardless of where we play, that's what we're trying to drive."

Wasps' Alfie Barbeary could yet be another forceful contributor during this tournament, with Seibold suggesting he is not in the squad simply to make up the numbers. "We wouldn't have had Alfie at this camp if we didn't see the potential for him to push into this squad," said the Australian, who has been working on improving Barbeary's defensive work-rate. "Once he improves that part of his game he is going to be one hell of a player. He is as good a ball carrier as we have."

Seibold is looking forward to coming up against Wales, where he took his first coaching role with the Celtic Crusaders rugby league side in 2006. His middle daughter was born in Bridgend, and he used to live in the nearby village of Tondur. "My first coaching job was in Wales. I'd finished playing and was a schoolteacher back in Australia. The RFL was setting up a rugby league franchise in South Wales, so one of the Brisbane Broncos assistant coaches asked me to come out and start the team because I'd played over here for Hull KR and London Broncos. It was a good experience."

During his time in south Wales, Seibold also spent valuable hours with his former team-mate Shaun Edwards. "He was the Wales defence coach at the time, so I spent a bit of time observing their sessions back in 2008. Shaun invited me in on a number of occasions. Their performances over a long period of time, first with Warren Gatland and now with Wayne Pivac as their head coach, have been very consistent."

Now, with Tuilagi's assistance, he is aiming to batter the nation he once called home.

Newcastle's Richards disputes red card after Exeter's late win

Newcastle	14
Exeter	15

Ross Heppenstall
Kingston Park

Dean Richards, the Newcastle director of rugby, could not hide his frustration after Callum Chick was sent off during the first half before Exeter pilfered the points late on to move ominously towards the play-off places. Chick, the Falcons captain and No 8, was shown a red card by the referee, Christophe Ridley, in the 25th minute for a high shot on Josh Hodge, Exeter's full-back.

Richards queried the haste with which the officials decided that Chick's shoulder had made contact with Hodge's head, arguing that the offence warranted no more than a yellow card. Newcastle fought valiantly with 14 men and were on course for a famous victory until the closing stages when the Exeter captain, Joe Simmonds, kicked a penalty to win it.

Richards, the former England captain said: "Josh Hodge clearly dropped his height. One of the issues we're having at the moment is they're trying to get to a really quick decision, rather than the correct decision."

"I would have accepted a yellow card but you can't make such a critical decision in such a big game as this, as quickly as they did. I thought it was really poor from them. You need to take the time to make the decision correctly, but they don't want to spend time on TMO decisions. When you're playing with people's livelihoods and careers, you can't do that."

Rob Baxter, the Exeter director of rugby, said: "It's not about whether it's an accident or not. It's a matter of contact to the head and it gets dealt with that way."

Defeat felt cruel on Newcastle on an emotionally fraught afternoon at a windswept Kingston Park. Before kick-off the retiring club legend Mark Wilson was introduced to the crowd and was given a rapturous reception



▲ Joe Simmonds's late penalty gives Exeter victory over 14-man Falcons

as he walked across the pitch with his children, son Zach and daughter Ella.

The passing of Steve Black, the hugely popular former Falcons coach, mentor to Jonny Wilkinson and Danny Cipriani, was also marked. As an image of the man universally known as Blackie was shown on Kingston Park's big screen, the stadium announcer said: "Blackie, you were a true one-off, a north-east sporting legend who will never be forgotten."

Intriguingly, among the crowd was a sizeable contingent from the Argentinian club Champagnat's Under-19 side, who are on tour in England. They took up a block of seats in the West Stand and sang their songs with gusto, supporting Exeter's former Falcon Santiago Grondona.

Newcastle opened the scoring when Will Haydon-Wood seized on an errant Exeter offload and showed impressive pace to race 80 metres inside the left channel to cross the line. Haydon-Wood then did superbly well to boot the conversion from close to the touchline.

Two minutes later, though, Hodge fielded a high bomb in midfield and was caught by Chick, who was shown a red card after consultation with Claire Hodnett, the television match official. Exeter sought to capitalise on their advantage and went close when Hodge grubbered to the left corner for Tom O'Flaherty, who knocked on just yards from the line. But, as the interval approached, the Chiefs were not to be denied.

A scrum penalty led to Baxter's team kicking to the left corner for a lineout five metres out and from the subsequent maul Patrick Schickerling emerged from a thicket of bodies to barrel over the line. Simmonds applied the conversion to level matters at 7-7 at half-time, when Hodge was replaced by Facundo Cordero.

Exeter began to dominate territory and three minutes into the second half they scored again when Jack Innard finished off from a lineout rolling maul inside the right channel. Simmonds could not convert but Newcastle roused themselves and hit back with a second try of their own as the hooker George McGuigan charged over the line from close range after excellent work from George Wacoke-coke and Matias Orlando.

After Simmonds's penalty gave Exeter victory, Baxter said: "Over four games now we've collected 12 points and are up to fifth. That shows you how important today was."

Newcastle Brown (Radwan 70); Penny, Wacoke-coke, Orlando, Earle (Montgomery 45); Haydon-Wood, Nordi-Kelemeti (Hodgson 74); Brocklebank, McGuigan (Blamire 63), Davison (Tampin 63), Peterson, Robinson, Basham, Collett, Chick Tries Haydon-Wood, McGuigan Cons Haydon-Wood 2 Sent off Chick (26)	Exeter Hodge (Cordero 41); Woodburn, Whitten (Skinner 67), Hendrickson, O'Flaherty; J Simmonds, S Maunder (J Maunder 67); Hepburn (Moon 60), Innard (Yeandle 60), Shickerling (Street 60), Kirsten (Pearson 41), Jenkins (Grondona 70), Skinner, Armand, Capstick Tries Shickerling, Innard Cons Simmonds Pen Simmonds
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Referee Christophe Ridley Attendance 6,205



Lauren Hemp's effort hit the post and was England's best chance against Spain
ANDREW BOYERS/
ACTION IMAGES/
REUTERS

Hemp goes close in display of strength in depth by Lionesses

England	0
Spain	0

Suzanne Wrack
Carrow Road

There may have been some raised eyebrows at the unusual starting XI to play Spain but a gutsy performance against a team laden with Barcelona's Champions League winners earned a 0-0 draw and demonstrated there is serious depth to England's squad looking ahead to the European Championship this summer.

In front of an impressive crowd of 14,284, despite the lashing rain, Lauren Hemp went closest for the Lionesses, smacking an effort against the post shortly after the restart on the second day of Arnold Clark Cup fixtures.

"I'm happy with the performance. I thought this performance was more mature than against Canada. That's development," Sarina Wiegman, the England manager, said.

"We want to win every game. That's how we approach a game. But we also say we don't win the Euros now. We're trying to stay really neutral if we win or lose. This is just

another stop on our journey to the Euros."

Wiegman had promised "some changes" to the starting XI to face the Catalan-heavy Spain and she delivered, with nine to the side that put in one of the best first-half performances the Lionesses have produced in years in their 1-1 draw with Canada on Thursday. Only Rachel Daly and Alex Greenwood remained, with the former shifted from right-back to left-back as backup options for Demi Stokes on the left are explored.

The successful double pivot partnership of Keira Walsh and Leah Williamson was relegated to the bench, with Manchester City's Georgia Stanway instead operating as a single pivot in front of Greenwood and fellow centre-back Jess Carter.

The England manager had said she wanted to "do a little more research" on the double pivot and try it again, but added: "We want to see other things, too, this week. We want to try out different players in positions and see how they connect to each other, so it's absolutely something that we want to see again. But we'll try out some other things too."

"In football things are dynamic," she said. "When you take a picture in a certain moment it's two pivots, and when you take a picture of a certain other moment it might be one pivot,

How they stand									
	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts	
England	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	2	
Spain	2	0	2	0	1	1	0	2	
Canada	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	
Germany	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	
Wed 23 Feb									
Spain v Canada	Molineux 2.30pm								
England v Germany	Molineux 7.30pm								

so we're trying things out with other players, too."

Spain had made five changes but the heartbeat of the side - the Ballon d'Or and Fifa best winner and Uefa player of the year, Alexia Putellas - remained with her fellow Barcelona midfielders Aitana Bonmati and Patri Guijarro.

Despite the tricky trio helping Spain to dominate possession with 66% of the ball, the England triumvirate of Stanway, the Arsenal midfielder Jordan Nobbs and team veteran Jill Scott, impressed as the visiting team were limited to four shots on target and only one in the first half.

Keeping Spain at bay is no mean feat - they had scored 97 goals in their previous 17 games before this match in Norwich - but the unorthodox

backline sitting in front of the debutant Hannah Hampton, whose distribution throughout was top notch, stood firm.

There was an urgency and intensity to England's play that kept them in the game but Spain looked patient, their passing crisp, and they seemed happy to wait for the opening. Despite the pre-Euros hype, Spain have yet to win a knockout game at a major tournament and are very much newly competitive on the international stage. The arrival of the direct, Norwich-produced winger Hemp in the second half almost immediately caught the visiting side off-guard, though, as she shifted the ball on to her left foot 30 seconds after coming on before cracking the ball off the left-hand post with Misa Rodríguez beaten.

Wiegman had given a heads up on the change that would come around the hour. With Spain in the ascendancy but Lucía García shooting poorly wide from 10 yards out in their best attempt, the excellent Stanway was shifted forward and Walsh and Williamson came on for Scott and Nobbs as England attempted to maintain their intensity and solidity. England created a handful of chances late on but they lacked an end product. Hampton also did well to stop a late shot from the substitute and player of the match Athenea del Castillo.

England 4-3-3 Hampton; Bronze, Carter, Greenwood, Daly; Stanway (Toone 80), Nobbs (Walsh 62), Scott (Williamson 62); Parris (Hemp 11), White, Mead (Kirby 72)	Spain 4-3-3 Rodríguez; Batlle (Carmona 62), Andrés León, S. García; Bonmati, Guijarro, Putellas; Cardona (Del Castillo 11), Hermoso (González 87), L. García (Sarriegi 74)
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Referee Iuliana Demetrescu (Rom)

Football In brief

Scottish Premiership
Giakoumakis hat-trick sees Celtic stretch lead

Giorgos Giakoumakis's late strike complete his hat-trick and sealed a 3-2 victory for Celtic over Dundee that stretched their lead at the top of the Premiership to three points. With Dundee's new manager, Mark McGhee, watching from the stands as he served the first of a six-game touchline ban, Danny Mullen put the league's bottom side into a shock lead following a 26th-minute corner. Giakoumakis then scored twice in four minutes only for Ryan Sweeney to equalise on the hour mark for the hosts. But in a tense finale, Giakoumakis struck an 86th-minute winner, allowing Celtic to capitalise fully on Rangers' 1-1 draw at Dundee United earlier in the day. **PA Media**

Peterborough
Ferguson resigns with club five points adrift

Darren Ferguson has resigned as manager of Peterborough with his side languishing in the bottom three of the Championship. Saturday's defeat at Derby left them five points adrift of safety and without a league win since 11 December. Ferguson, who led the club to automatic promotion from League One last season, offered his resignation in a phone call to co-owner Darragh MacAnthony, who said in a statement: "Darren is one of the greatest managers of this football club, most certainly in the modern era ... he will always be described as a legend by myself and my partners." **PA Media**

Arsenal
Wilshere signs with Danish side Aarhus

Jack Wilshere has signed for the Danish side Aarhus Gymnastikforening until the end of the season. Wilshere has been without a club since being released by Bournemouth last summer and there were rumours he was going to sign a deal with Arsenal having spent time training with the club where he made his name. However, the 30-year-old midfielder has instead joined Aarhus, who are currently seventh in the Danish Superliga. **Guardian sport**



Jack Wilshere will continue his career in the Danish Superliga

▼ Luis Díaz is embraced by Kostas Tsimikas after scoring against Norwich
XINHUA/SHUTTERSTOCK

They thought it was all over but City's slip has reignited the title race

Klopp's 'greatest squad' close in on the champions after Spurs expose a chink in the league leaders' armour

Jonathan Wilson



As if from nowhere a title race has appeared. Manchester City's 12-point lead is down to six which means that if Liverpool win their game in hand and if Liverpool win at the Etihad Stadium in April, the two clubs could be level on points.

City are still in the better position, particularly given they have not lost a league game at home against Liverpool under Pep Guardiola. But what had started to look like a procession has, quite unexpectedly, regained a sense of intrigue.

It is an indication of how dominant City had come to appear that this feels surprising. Liverpool, after all, have won 11 of their past 14 Premier League matches. In any previous era, that would have been obvious title-winning form. Drawing at Tottenham and Chelsea and losing by a single goal at Leicester should not be a wobble from which there is no coming back.

That is a wider concern: it is always tempting for English football to congratulate itself because it has not gone the way of many European leagues and become a monopoly, but it is still troubling if winning the title means having to pick up at least 95 points. That is not the sign of a league that is providing healthy competition on a regular basis. That those are the standards is down in part to the genius of

Jürgen Klopp and Guardiola, but also to a broken financial structure.

More immediately, though, what is striking is that the expectation had been that Liverpool would wobble in January and February as Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mané went to the Africa Cup of Nations - not just for the two league games they would miss but because there is always a risk after any tournament of emotional hangover. That the pair faced each other in the final could have heightened that; it took a lot of England's players until late autumn to begin to find their rhythm again after the European Championship. So far, though, there has been no indication at all that either is suffering any kind of reaction.

In that, it helps that the great front three now has backup. Diogo Jota had already given one extra option, but Luis Díaz has settled remarkably quickly. Playing for Klopp looks complicated; it must take players time to learn the pressing schema and assimilate the patterns but, as Klopp has said, Díaz looked a Liverpool player from the moment he stepped on the pitch for them.

The famous front three have scored four goals between them in the past two games without all being on the field together at any point. Jordan Henderson and Thiago Alcântara have also both made significant contributions from the bench in the past week: little wonder Klopp



▲ Bernardo Silva in anguish during Manchester City's 3-2 defeat by Spurs



Liverpool were expected to wobble without Salah and Mané but they did not

speaks of this squad as the greatest he has had.

The danger for those hoping for a proper title race is that this becomes a two-team procession in the way 2018-19 was. Then a run of four draws in six games from the end of January to the beginning of March was enough for Liverpool to cede their advantage to City; Liverpool won their last nine league games of the season but could not get past City as they won their final 14. It was all very impressive, a great demonstration both of ability and nerve, but it was also, for the neutral, rather lacking in drama. A great title race, such as 1971-72 or 2011-12, demands fallibility.

City had looked remorseless.

The title race had seemed over less because it was inconceivable that Liverpool should embark on a winning run than because it seemed implausible City would drop enough points to let them back in. When a side wins 14 out of 16 games, it feels absurd to identify flaws, but perhaps in retrospect there have been hints that they were not quite so impermeable as they appeared.

Leicester, in losing 6-3 to them, showed that City could still be vulnerable to counterattacks, that those balls played in behind the defensive line that have always been a potential vulnerability could still cause problems. Spurs were ruthless in exploiting that in Saturday's 3-2 win, largely because City struggled to deal with Harry Kane as he dropped off the front line. He was a danger both with balls played on the turn to runners outside him and with his late runs.

The attacking nature of City's

The run-in

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Man City	26	20	3	3	63	17	+46	63
Liverpool	25	17	6	2	64	20	+44	57

Remaining fixtures

Manchester City		
26 February	Everton	A
6 March	Manchester United	H
14 March	Crystal Palace	A
19 March	Brighton	H
2 April	Burnley	A
9 April	Liverpool	H
16 April	Wolves	A
23 April	Watford	H
30 April	Leeds	A
7 May	Newcastle	H
15 May	West Ham	A
22 May	Aston Villa	H
Liverpool		
23 February	Leeds	H
5 March	West Ham	H
12 March	Brighton	A
16 March	Arsenal	A
20 March	Manchester United	H
2 April	Watford	H
9 April	Manchester City	A
16 April	Aston Villa	A
23 April	Everton	H
30 April	Newcastle	A
7 May	Tottenham	H
15 May	Southampton	A
22 May	Wolves	H

full-backs means the sort of run from Son Heung-min that led to Tottenham's opening goal is always a potential danger, but where City have been able to neutralise that is in the form of Rodri blocking the space Kane exploited to spring Son. Kane, for all the complaints that he should spend more time in the box, is exceptionally good at that. His relationship with Son is very close, but other sides may look at that, and the way James Maddison played against City, and see an opportunity.

Still, perspective is required. City still had the better expected goals (xG) against Tottenham. Not since the defeat against Brighton in the penultimate game of last season, by which point City's focus had firmly switched to the Champions League, have City had a lower xG than their opponents in a league game. They remain an awesome force.

But there is, perhaps, at last, just a glitch in their relentlessness and, if Liverpool maintain their exceptional form, there may yet be some life in this season. At the very least a neutral can hope there is enough doubt that that game on 9 April feels meaningful.

Guardiola admits his side are facing a fight from the red corner

Jamie Jackson

Pep Guardiola has said that Manchester City are in a fight for the Premier League title after their 3-2 home defeat against Tottenham on Saturday.

City's first loss in 17 Premier League games leaves the champions on 63 points, six ahead of Liverpool, who have a match in hand and visit the Etihad Stadium on 9 April.

Guardiola was clear that City are now in a tussle with the Merseyside club, having led by 12 points earlier this month.

"We have to fight for every game and every game we are going to win we will be closer," the City manager said. "I said weeks ago we have to make a lot of points to be champions and this is what we will try to do.

"I think we performed well - honestly. I never said the title race was over. It's normal. In January and February the teams at the bottom won their games because everyone fights for everything. It will be difficult. We know it.

"But it's happened. We lost a game. We will recover with training sessions and prepare for the next game."

City were never ahead in the match, having to equalise strikes from Dejan Kulusevski and Harry Kane before the latter's 95th-minute winner. "They defended in the 18-yard box and it was so difficult," Guardiola said.

"They allowed us to go outside and closed all the channels inside, and then after that they could run

with their quality but they didn't run much. It was difficult. Every time we played inside we had to then move outside and we arrived there and crossed. But for many reasons we were not there to score.

"The first goal came from the quality they have and the second



▲ Pep Guardiola says Manchester City made mistakes in Spurs defeat

is difficult to defend and the third was our mistake. We were close to drawing, and maybe winning, but congratulations to Spurs."

The victory halted a run of three consecutive league defeats for Antonio Conte's team. Eric Dier said: "This win is important if we take it in the right way. If we recognise that if we play with that intensity, with that commitment, that unity; if we play with that every game we can really push on from this.

"I think we have to take this win in the right way, not get carried away but recognise what we need to do as a team to get results and play well. We have to take it with humility and understand that as a team we can be very good."

Podence's precise finish keeps Wolves in hunt

Wolves	2
Neves 9, Podence 66	
Leicester	1
Lookman 41	
Peter Lansley Molineux	

Dreaming is for free, as someone round these parts once said, and Daniel Podence's second-half winner means Wolves are now two points behind fifth place in the Premier League with two games in hand and both Arsenal and West Ham, the two teams immediately above them, to play away this coming week.

Bruno Lage's team also have two games in hand on Manchester United, who sit six points above them in the final Champions League place, and the Molineux diehards were blasting out their song about following the Wanderers around Europe again even as Leicester piled on the pressure in the closing stages, Kasper Schmeichel coming up for a corner. But Wolves, having taken the lead through Rúben Neves before Ademola Lookman equalised, held on to reclaim seventh place, and had the bonus of reintroducing one of the best players, Pedro Neto, out for a year with a fractured kneecap, for the final 10 minutes.

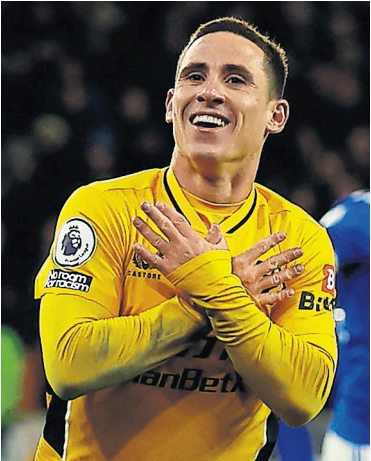
No team have won more Premier League games in 2022 than Wolves and, crucially, they have lost only once in the 52 league games in which they have taken the lead since winning promotion four years ago.

Leicester played strongly and created enough chances to have won but they are now winless in six domestic matches, their worst run since the latter days of Claude Puel's reign three years ago. They have not kept a clean sheet away from home in the Premier League for more than a year since they last played at Molineux.

Brendan Rodgers, confirming Jamie Vardy is "seven to 10 days away" from returning to contention, was much encouraged by his team's showing. "Sometimes after you lose there is disappointment or frustration but I am very enthused," the Leicester manager said. "I have seen us starting to return to our levels of play and creativity. It is just disappointing, they had two shots from outside the box and it's two goals."

With a three-goal advantage to take to Denmark this Thursday for the second leg of their European Conference League second round, Leicester still have European ambitions of their own. But they are nearer the relegation zone than the top seven and gave themselves a statistical and tactical mountain to climb by conceding within nine minutes.

Neves's superb opener gave Wolves the kind of platform they relish. The Portugal playmaker, in the form of his life, pinged a sweet crossfield pass out to Podence. When his cross was unconvincingly cleared by Daniel Amartey and Leander



▲ Daniel Podence shows his delight after scoring the winner for Wolves

Dendoncker headed the ball back inside, Raúl Jiménez was allowed time to tee up Neves whose unerring first-time shot from just outside the penalty area Schmeichel could only help into the net.

This was Wolves' first goal against Leicester in six Premier League meetings and Leicester looked there for the taking at this stage. Yet apart from the visitors suffering from the heebie-jeebies every time Wolves had a corner, Leicester thoroughly deserved to be level by half-time.

The number of dangerous balls they fed across the face of goal was a constant source of concern for the home team, so it was no surprise when Lookman slid in to score his sixth goal of the season from Marc Albrighton's low cross after Youri Tielemans' brilliant through ball.

Yet it was when Rodgers' team were clearly on top that Wolves regained the lead midway through the second half. For once when a Leicester attack broke down, Wolves had players the offensive side of the ball and Rayan Aït-Nouri did well to tease Ricardo Pereira in making inroads down the left.

Dendoncker squared the ball along the edge of the penalty area where Podence shot low into the bottom corner. There was a VAR delay to check that Schmeichel's view had not been compromised by Jiménez's presence before Wolves could complete their celebrations.

If it was Nuno Espírito Santo who set Wolves fans dreaming, it may be Bruno Lage who converts this into reality. "For my part, this is no time for anyone to relax," the Wolves head coach said. "In December, January and February, we are coming with solid performances, scoring goals, winning games. If we keep doing it, with important players coming back, we can do something special."

Wolves 3-5-2 Sá; Kilman, Coady, Saïss; Semedo, Dendoncker, Neves, Moutinho (Hwang 58), Aït-Nouri (Marçal 88); Jiménez, Podence (Neto 81) <i>Subs not used</i> Ruddy, Trincão, Silva, Otto, Gomes, Cundle	Leicester 4-1-4-1 Schmeichel; Pereira, Amartey, Soyuncu, Thomas; Ndidi (Maddison 74); Albrighton, Tielemans, Dewsbury-Hall, Lookman; Daka (Iheanacho 73) <i>Subs not used</i> Ward, Jakupovic, Pérez, Choudhury, Vestergaard, Mendy, Soumaré
Referee Craig Pawson	

Premier League Saturday's talking points

Arsenal Smith Rowe 48 Saka 79	2	Aston Villa	0	Brighton	0
Brentford Nørgaard 90	1	Watford Dennis 78	1	Burnley Weghorst 21, Brownhill 40, Rodriguez 69	3
Referee Jonathan Moss Att 60,015		Referee Robert Jones		Referee Kevin Friend	
Thomas Frank has been clear in marking the Newcastle game this Saturday as the day when Christian Eriksen is due to return to competitive action for Brentford. No pressure should be put on Eriksen to bounce straight back to his old levels. But Brentford would benefit from even a fraction of his best form: they are not offering enough going forward and are short of someone who can roam between the lines and pick a pass. “Physically he is in a fine place, he looks better and better,” Frank said of Eriksen. Brentford’s season is in need of the stimulus he could offer. Nick Ames		“Graig Catchart” sounds like an unlicensed video game alias, doesn’t it? But it was, believe it or not, etched on to Manchester United’s honours board when Craig Cathcart was named the club’s Young Player of the Year in 2007. With hindsight, it could be considered symbolic of the under-appreciated career he has carved out away from Old Trafford. Quietly excellent in Watford’s victory at Aston Villa, his efforts ensured Ben Foster’s post-match YouTube recording was more labour-intensive than the 90 minutes that came before it. Sam Dalling		There was a theory that Burnley had pulled off a transfer coup in January by replacing outgoing Chris Wood with Wout Weghorst, a Dutch international striker, for a £12m fee. That feeling solidified on Saturday after Weghorst scored his first goal for the club, then teed up Josh Brownhill to put Burnley 2-0 ahead at Brighton. Sean Dyche lauded the 29-year-old’s quality and all-round team play after his team’s first win since October. If Weghorst can continue to build on his impressive start, Dyche’s side may yet have a chance at pulling off an unlikely relegation escape. Alex Reid	
Man of the match Martin Ødegaard <i>Arsenal</i>		Man of the match Craig Cathcart <i>Watford</i>		Man of the match Wout Weghorst <i>Burnley</i>	

Crystal Palace	0	 <p><i>Hakim Ziyech kept his cool to give Chelsea a last-minute victory</i></p>	Liverpool	3
Chelsea Ziyech 89	1		Norwich Rashica 48	1
Referee David Coote Att 25,109			Referee Mike Dean Att 53,135	
Given the amount of air miles his players clocked up last week in becoming world champions, it was no surprise that Thomas Tuchel welcomed the prospect of Chelsea’s next two fixtures being played in London. The Carabao Cup final against Liverpool on Sunday will be an opportunity for Tuchel to win his fourth trophy at the club but he must first confront Lille in the Champions League last-16 first leg at Stamford Bridge tomorrow. “Playing Saturday-Tuesday should not be a problem for us - we are staying in London. We should be ready to fight on a good level.” Ed Aarons			It can be Sadio Mané’s fate to take second billing to Mohamed Salah, whose 150th Liverpool goal overshadowed Mané’s 108th, but it meant the Senegalese matched John Barnes’s total, and in 160 fewer games. Barnes spent more time on the touchline, Mané in the penalty area - but it is worth noting that none of the younger man’s 108 are penalties. “Sadio’s goal record is definitely insane as well,” Jürgen Klopp said, and Mané could become Liverpool’s 11th highest scorer some time next season. Though, just outside the top 10, that could leave him obscured again. Richard Jolly	
Man of the match Hakim Ziyech <i>Chelsea</i>			Man of the match Mohamed Salah <i>Liverpool</i>	

Manchester City Gündogan 33, Mahrez 90pen	2	Southampton S Armstrong 52, Long 84	2	West Ham Dawson 32	1
Tottenham Kulusevski 4, Kane 59 90	3	Everton	0	Newcastle Willock 45	1
Referee Anthony Taylor Att 53,201		Referee Andy Madley Att 31,312		Referee Chris Kavanagh	
There is a definite blueprint regarding how to beat Pep Guardiola’s ball-hoggers. Crystal Palace employed it in the 2-0 win at the Etihad Stadium in October and Tottenham did the same on Saturday: adopt a low block, be patient as possession is relayed around the blue shirts and, when the moment arrives, pounce. Then race in behind the sluggish centre-backs and score. In an era of attack coaches, forensic video analysis and speedy forwards, there should be no excuse for more teams not attempting to exploit this glaring vulnerability. Jamie Jackson		Everton’s failure to service Dominic Calvert-Lewin in this defeat will be of concern to Frank Lampard. The striker has not scored since returning from a four-month absence in January and Everton did not register a shot on target at St Mary’s. They face Manchester City on Saturday. “We can’t use Dominic as a battering ram,” Lampard said. “He has too much quality for that and I don’t want to play that way. It’s two-fold. Give Dominic time and give him the service and play around him as much as we can to get the benefit out of him and all the forward-end players.” Ben Fisher		Joe Willock provided the decisive moment to secure a point at West Ham and his performance suggests he can be instrumental in keeping Newcastle in the Premier League. Willock’s instinctive finish was his first goal of the season and his energy caused West Ham plenty of problems. The 22-year-old was a major outlet for Newcastle as they extended their unbeaten league run to six games. With Kieran Trippier and Allan Saint-Maximin injured, Willock’s attacking threat will be a significant asset and, in this form, he should be able to help steer his team clear of trouble. Simon Mail	
Man of the match Harry Kane <i>Tottenham</i>		Man of the match Kyle Walker-Peters <i>Southampton</i>		Man of the match Joe Willock <i>Newcastle</i>	



Leeds deep in relegation mire after Elanga's revenge

Leeds 2

Rodrigo 53, Raphinha 54

Manchester United 4

Maguire 34, Fernandes 45, Fred 70, Elanga 88

Possession

Leeds 54% Man Utd 46%

Shots on target

6 9

Total attempts

16 15

Louise Taylor

Elland Road

The good, the bad, the ugly and the chaotic combined as Manchester United took a significant step towards Europe and Leeds moved too close to the Championship for comfort. The latest renewal of one of English football's greatest rivalries was undeniably exhilarating but depressingly

unpleasant undertones were evident as missiles were hurled from the stands at visiting players, with one hitting the Manchester United substitute Anthony Elanga.

A defiant Leeds drew level, albeit briefly, after falling two goals behind, while Jadon Sancho had arguably his best game for Ralf Rangnick's side as questions concerning Marcelo Bielsa's future at Leeds resurfaced. Manchester United's first visit to a full Elland Road since 2003 coincided with a day of torrential rain and gusty winds, with the hazardous underfoot conditions more than matched by the hostile atmosphere.

To say there is antipathy between these two sets of fans would be putting it mildly and a competing soundtrack featuring, most politely, the Leeds anthem *Marching On Together* and the visitors' favourite *Pride Of All Europe* heightened the frenetic onfield intensity.

With Bielsa's side struggling to

retain possession on the sodden surface, Rangnick's players exerted greater control and cohesion. They swiftly set the tone when the initially influential Paul Pogba nutmegged a startled Diego Llorente before crossing and seeing Cristiano Ronaldo denied by Illan Meslier's knee.

Rangnick held talks with senior players last week, apparently in response to tensions centring on Ronaldo. Harry Maguire has denied suggestions of a rift and the pair combined to positive effect as Manchester United showed they can still score from corners after all. With Ronaldo serving as a decoy and Meslier wrong-footed, Maguire lost Llorente, met Luke Shaw's delivery and headed his first United goal since January 2021.

Perhaps Rangnick's psychologist, Sascha Lense, really is as good as advertised. Back in August Bruno Fernandes scored a hat-trick as Leeds went down 5-1 at Old Trafford and, shortly before half-time, Rangnick's

attacking playmaker got on the scoresheet here.

Fernandes's header will have reminded Leeds fans why they pine for their injured central-midfield enforcer, Calvin Phillips. With a head wound forcing Robin Koch's withdrawal, that department proved worryingly understaffed.

Fernandes was left completely unattended as Victor Lindelöf played a slick one-two with Jesse Lingard - making his first Premier League start this season - and pinged an astute pass towards the excellent Sancho. Sancho's cross exposed the alarming lack of home resistance and Fernandes was entirely unopposed as he glanced a header beyond Meslier from near point-blank range.

With the hosts' optimism evaporating, Bielsa - who seems increasingly unlikely to be at Elland Road next season - needed to change

things. On came Raphinha and within minutes of the talismanic, if recently jaded-looking, Brazilian right-winger's introduction at the start of the second half, an unlikely Leeds comeback suddenly looked possible. Their temporary renaissance began with a little luck, Rodrigo reducing the deficit with a wickedly swerving, apparently fluke, cross-shot which deceived and evaded David de Gea.

Inside a minute Bielsa's players had levelled with Raphinha tapping in Dan James's clever cross as Shaw, the Brazilian's supposed marker, dozed. When that equaliser survived a VAR review occasioned by Adam Forshaw's perceived foul on Fernandes in the buildup, the celebratory roar may well have been audible on the other side of the Pennines.

After Ronaldo had been booked for dissent, the moment for Rangnick - who will have noted the ease with which James dodged Lingard and Aaron Wan-Bissaka - really to earn his money arrived. The German duly hooked the fading Lingard and, rather more contentiously, Pogba, introducing Fred and Elanga.

Talk about inspired. Shortly after that switch, a fluid Manchester United counterattack concluded with Sancho contributing the cutest of layoffs and Fred lashing home a superlative goal.



▲ Harry Maguire scored his first goal for United in more than a year



Fitting end to an unsavoury afternoon

Anthony Elanga scores Manchester United's fourth after he was struck by a missile thrown from the crowd

TOM JENKINS/
THE GUARDIAN

The celebrations, and the occasion, were scarred when an object struck Elanga on the head. Sadly it would not prove an isolated incident – Maguire picked another missile up from the pitch as the teams trooped off at half-time and presented it to the referee, Paul Tierney.

Mercifully Elanga was not badly hurt and was able to rejoin the increasingly helter-skelter drama. After watching De Gea divert Stuart Dallas's volley, Rangnick decided caution was called for and switched to a back three, replacing Ronaldo with Raphaël Varane.

Elanga appeared to have had the last word, the 19-year-old Swede sliding Manchester United's fourth beneath Meslier after Fernandes's exquisite flick confounded Pascal Struijk. It seemed a fitting finale but a less pleasing reality intruded as Junior Firpo's foul on Elanga provoked a minor mass melee.

Leeds 4-2-1-3 Meslier; Ayling, Llorente (Gelhardt h-t), Struijk, Dallas; Forshaw, Koch (Firpo 31); Klich; James, Rodrigo, Harrison (Raphinha ht) <i>Subs not used</i> Klaesson, Roberts, Bate, Cresswell, Shackleton, Kenneh	Manchester United 4-2-3-1 De Gea; Wan-Bissaka, Lindelöf, Maguire, Shaw, Pogba (Fred 67), McTominay; Lingard (Elanga 67), Fernandes, Sancho; Ronaldo (Varane 85) <i>Subs not used</i> Henderson, Rashford, Dalot, Alex Telles, Matic, Mata
Referee Paul Tierney	

Missile shame Rangnick hits out over crowd coin strike

Aaron Bower

The Manchester United manager, Ralf Rangnick, condemned the unsavoury scenes which led to Anthony Elanga being struck by a coin from the Leeds United stand during a fiery contest at Elland Road, with the hosts investigating the incident.

Elanga was hit by an object from the crowd in the aftermath of Fred's goal which made it 3-2 in the visitors' favour. The 19-year-old was unhurt and recovered to score United's fourth in stoppage time and secure a vital three points on an afternoon when Rangnick's side had earlier squandered a 2-0 half-time lead thanks to two second-half goals in two minutes from Rodrigo and Raphinha.

"As far as I know there is some investigation going on from Leeds United," Rangnick said afterwards. "In the end, Anthony looked well and he was happy about scoring. Obviously things like that should not happen."

The incident cast a shadow over a fiercely contested game, with no shortage of talking points. Rangnick praised his side for the maturity they showed in responding to being pulled back level and eventually going on to win the game. "It was a very intense game and if you were a neutral, you could say it was entertaining," he said. "There were only few moments when nothing happened."

"At half-time we were fully aware they'd have a go at us and play with more aggression. Rodrigo didn't intend to play the ball where he did but within two minutes, it's 2-2. We showed maturity and showed unity on the pitch and in the end we deserved to win."

The victory moves United four points clear of fifth-placed West Ham after the Hammers' draw with Newcastle, while Leeds remain firmly entrenched in the relegation battle.

They lost Robin Koch to a head injury in the first half, but only after the game had already been stopped because of an earlier collision which left Koch bloodied and needing treatment. When he was replaced, Leeds did not use a concussion substitute but Marcelo Bielsa appeared to suggest his withdrawal was not because of concussion concerns.

"He had a cut in his head and what excludes him is the cut. If the cut is the most significant thing than the knock he received, I acted in accordance to that."



▲ Anthony Elanga is brought to his knees to his teammates' concern

Analysis
Barney Ronay *Elland Road*



Sancho gives fraught visitors momentum on wild and rousing day

This was an afternoon of blood and roses in Yorkshire, a fun, bruising, furious mess of a game. Midway through the second half there was an interlude where six players joined in a kind of rolling, whirling maul close to the centre circle, bodies entwined like a multicoloured octopus writhing on the quayside, the ball punted, thrashed, semi-forgotten.

At times Manchester United almost seemed to get a hold on the day, to take the air out of this fury, only for a misplaced pass or a splash of the sodden pitch to leave them chasing back once again. But by the end it was an afternoon that seemed to offer something else too, a significant note in this ongoing, oddly fraught United mini-era.

There had been strange noises around the red side of Manchester all week, whispers and groans, the sense of something rotten in the state of Ralf Rangnick. Nothing was resolved here. A rousing 4-2 win offered three more points en route to the season-saving goal of a place in the Champions League. But it felt like a purging experience all the same.

This is a clattery metal hangar of a ground, the corrugated stands creating a uniquely footballing sound, like the tonal quality on a vinyl LP. At times that shared energy seemed to spill from the stands to the pitch, lines blurring as goals were scored, intruders wrestled by stewards, objects thrown. It was wild out there, a wild fixture on a wild afternoon at a wild moment in time.

In the middle of all this, it was also a very good game for Jadon Sancho, who has begun to find himself here in recent weeks. Starting on the right, he was neat, effective and involved. He grew more assured as the game went on. He made more dribbles and had more passes in the attacking third than any other player.

Sancho is like this at his best, a relentless source of pressure with the skill to produce his own bespoke little moments of skill and incision. Wind him up and let him go: he really should be nothing but an asset to this team. He also gave the final pass for two of the goals, although on both occasions others played a larger part in breaking Leeds open. Sancho is also still only 21 years old, an itinerant presence who has never played in an occasion quite like this, but still produced his best game at United.

It felt like a block to build around. Not to mention an interesting point of comparison with Paul Pogba, who started in a risky-looking midfield duo with Scott McTominay. In his hour and a bit on the pitch Elland Road witnessed a perfect running tableau of Pogba-ism, a rounded picture of inalienable strengths and inalienable weaknesses.

Some will point to his almost total disappearance as Leeds came back to make it 2-2, a man suddenly doing a very slow cross-country jog in the middle of a rain-sodden football match. But Pogba was also United's main source of incision early on. At times he looked like the only person "playing football" in the middle of all that blunt and necessary energy.

Pogba lost the ball, misplaced 40% of his passes, was rolled like a revolving door in the centre circle and left face-down in the mulch.

But he kept getting up. And he did the two best things in the opening half-hour. First he produced an opportunity so beautifully gift-wrapped it seemed to glimmer with spangles and rolled ribbons, standing up against Adam Forshaw, leaning one way, feinting back, then gliding into open space. The cross found a route through Diego Llorente's legs only for Illan Meslier to produce a sublime

Sancho is like this at his best, a relentless source of pressure who can produce his own bespoke moments of skill



▲ Jadon Sancho was on form on a wet, stormy afternoon at Elland Road

TOM PURSLOW/MANCHESTER UNITED/GETTY IMAGES

one-handed save as Cristiano Ronaldo scuffed his connection.

A few minutes later Pogba did it again, wriggling and bouncing away from two white shirts in the tiniest of spaces, like a man getting changed in a telephone box, then laying on a nudged pass for Bruno Fernandes to shoot. From the corner that followed Harry Maguire opened the scoring, holding off Forshaw and butting the ball into the net.

Fernandes scored United's second in first-half stoppage time. Victor Lindelöf spotted a huge open space and simply galloping forward. His pass found Sancho with time to hang a cross up for Fernandes to nod home almost inside the six-yard box.

Leeds were energised at the start of the second half. Rodrigo pulled one back. After which point a short Manchester United pass into Fernandes, standing 45 yards from goal, stopped on the marshy grass and was duly stolen from his toe, leaving Fernandes in a wailing heap as Dan James's cross was turned in by Raphina.

With 70 minutes gone it was 3-2. Fred provided the finish, snaking in behind Sancho to take his elegant little layoff, then spanking the ball in from a sharp angle. Anthony Elanga added a fourth. And in that final 20 minutes there was something else, a rare sense of grace for this cut-and-shut team, crammed with oddities, pressed-men, monuments to managers past.

Faced with this obstacle, Ralf's United, a place of schisms and cliques, had produced something coherent and spirited. This was the real beauty of an occasion that felt at times like a trip into some rousing and deeply stylised version of the footballing past. Whatever the systemic issues, the weird structures, the sharp commercial teeth driving this club, the game still gets in at the edges. With Sancho beginning to bloom, this short-lived United team will feel it has something that passes for momentum.



Beijing 2022
Winter Olympics

▼ Athletes enter the stadium during the closing ceremony in Beijing
HOW HWEE YOUNG/EPA



Zero sum Games Good, bad, ugly - and yes, truly exceptional

China staged an event that brought us highs and lows against a backdrop of drugs, Covid, abuse and torment

Sean Ingle
Beijing



At the end of a Winter Olympics like no other, moments before a furious barrage of fireworks tattooed the Beijing skyline, the German president of the International Olympic Committee gave an extraordinarily upbeat assessment of these Games.

"The Olympic spirit could only shine so brightly because the Chinese people set the stage in such an excellent way - and in a safe way," Thomas Bach said. "The Olympic villages were outstanding. The venues - magnificent. The organisation - extraordinary. On behalf of the best winter sport athletes of the world, I say: Thank you, our Chinese friends!"

It had been, Bach added, a

"truly exceptional" Winter Games. Exceptional? Yes. But in myriad ways: good and bad.

However, if there is a lasting requiem to these Games, it was soundtracked by Kirill Richter's enchanting melody *In Memoriam*, the music to which the 15-year-old skater Kamila Valieva leapt and spun, performing the first quad in Olympic history during the team event.

It was the Russian's calling card to the world. Another came less than 48 hours later when she failed a drugs test for the banned heart medication TMZ. What followed was one of the most extraordinary - and desperate weeks - in Olympic history. By turns Valieva was vilified, hounded, supported, temporarily reprieved by the court of arbitration for sport, and then - with the eyes of the world boring down on her in the individual event - her world finally fell apart.

She fell twice. Departed the ice in tears. And then another twist of the knife as her coach, Eteri Tutberidze, lashed out at her. As a spectacle it was compelling, appalling and utterly sad.

Not since Ben Johnson tested positive at the Seoul Games in 1988 has a drugs scandal so discombobulated our sensibilities; so shocked the world. This, after all, is a 15-year-old. She could never have acquired banned drugs by herself. Essentially it was cold abuse by a different name.

Another tragedy: Valieva, who is widely regarded as the greatest female skater the world has seen, will probably never compete in a Winter Olympics again. She was not the only extraordinary story that night. The runner-up, Alexandra Trusova, performed five quads but still lost to another Russian, Anna Shcherbakova. "I hate skating. I hate it. I hate this sport," she shouted afterwards. "I will never go out on the ice again!" It made Tonya and Nancy look tame.

It was the story of these Games and then some. However, Valieva's drug case may not be settled for months and there was huge sympathy for the US and Japan teams that came second behind the Russian Olympic Committee in the team skating. They never got to

enjoy their moment on the podium in Beijing.

Chatting to Max Cobb, the president and chief executive of US biathlon, reminded me over the weekend that this is not new. "Over the last three decades I have been a part of every Olympic Winter Games, as a coach, organiser or official," he said. "Sadly, I have witnessed more than my fair share of doping scandals and what I can say with 100% certainty is that the athletes who were cheated were the last ones the system served."

The spectacle of Kamila Valieva was compelling, appalling and utterly sad




"The victims were the biggest losers. Their moments of glory were stolen from them only to have scant recognition which in far too many instances came years later."

Of course there were incredible sporting moments, too. For 16 years Lindsey Jacobellis was known as the snowboarder who was miles clear of the Turin 2006 Olympics board cross final - until she fell on the penultimate jump while showing off by taking a celebratory grab of her board. At the ripe old age of 36 she redeemed herself by winning two snowboard cross golds.

There was the heartache and bravery of Mikaela Shiffrin, who came into these Games hunting five



▲ Kamila Valieva breaks down after the trauma of her free skate programme
DAVID J PHILLIP/AP PHOTO

Medal table				
				Total
Norway	16	8	13	37
Germany	12	10	5	27
China	9	4	2	15
USA	8	10	7	25
Sweden	8	5	5	18
Netherlands	8	5	4	17
Austria	7	7	4	18
Switzerland	7	2	5	14
ROC	6	12	14	32
France	5	7	2	14
Canada	4	8	14	26
Japan	3	6	9	18
Italy	2	7	8	17

medals but left with none - and yet still found time to speak powerfully about her loss to the media. The US figure skater Nathan Chen was extraordinary as he won Olympic gold. The Norwegian biathlete Johannes Thingnes Boe won four gold medals as his country dominated the medal table again.

But these Games will linger in the memory for other reasons, too - in particular the extraordinary closed-loop system, which meant that athletes, officials and journalists were not allowed any interaction with mainline China.

Incredibly everyone at the Games also had to do a daily PCR test and lived under the threat of being placed into a special isolation facility if they had a positive. As the speed skater Claudia Pechstein put it, when asked what her main target was for Beijing: "To be negative for Covid." She was far from alone.

But such a policy, while immensely suffocating, worked. Yesterday Juan Antonio Samaranch, chair of the IOC Coordination Commission for Beijing, said the system had worked "100%" - with 1.8 million Covid-19 tests conducted during the Games with only 437 positive tests reported.

And, ultimately, China will be delighted with how these Games went. After all, these were an Olympics that began under a series of shadows: with spiky questions over human rights, particularly in the western Xinjiang region - where more than a million Uyghurs are in re-education camps - and the fate of the tennis player Peng Shuai.

But while these issues bubbled under, particularly when China chose the Uyghur cross-country skier Dinigeer Yilamujiang to light the flame, and when the Beijing spokesman Yan Jiarong claimed that "so-called forced labour" in the region was "lies" - they never dominated the discourse.


China also ended these Games third in the table with 15 medals, including nine golds. They would certainly have taken that beforehand. Notably at the closing ceremony their two biggest stars, the 18-year-olds Su Yiming and Eileen Gu, walked into the stadium together for the parade.

As they did so, Xi Jinping applauded in approval. And, if you looked closely, you could even detect a smile.

Skiing

Austria win team gold as Shiffrin misses out

Bryan Armen Graham
Beijing

 Mikaela Shiffrin will travel home empty-handed from Beijing after the USA missed the podium by 0.42 seconds in the mixed team parallel yesterday.

The 26-year-old American - the headline attraction of a US team including River Radamus, Paula Moltzan and Tommy Ford - came tantalisingly close to a redemptive bronze after defeating a Slovakia team without their star Petra Vlhova in their opening tie before upsetting Italy to reach the medal round.

But the Americans were denied a shot at gold by Germany in the semi-finals, then bowed to Norway in a bronze-medal match-up on a tie-breaker to finish fourth and out of the medals. The top-seeded Austria won the gold in the mixed-gender team event, which debuted on the Olympic programme four years ago in Pyeongchang, edging out a German team who took the silver.

The knockout competition represented Shiffrin's last chance at a medal after she finished no better than ninth in five individual races while failing to cross the finish line in three of them, an outcome that would have been unthinkable a fortnight ago when the three-times overall World Cup champion and two-times Olympic champion arrived with designs on Janica Kostelic's women's record of four medals at a single Winter Games.

"I am not disappointed," Shiffrin

said. "I have had a lot of disappointing moments at these Games. Today is not one of them - today is my favourite memory. This was the best possible way that I could imagine ending the Games, skiing with such strong teammates."

The last alpine skiing event of the Beijing Games finally went off yesterday, having been postponed for a day because of high winds, on the Ice River course that has been a house of horrors for Shiffrin at these Olympics. She entered the curtain-dropper having not made it to the bottom of the course in the slalom, the giant slalom and the slalom portion of the alpine combined, skiing out three times in the technical races that are the foundation of her dominance.

The Americans were seeded sixth



▲ Mikaela Shiffrin and the US team lost the bronze-medal match to Norway
DENIS BALIBOUSE/REUTERS

BOA chief says UK needs to be tough on own guilty athletes

➔ *Continued from page 44*

into Valieva found that this was part of a sporting system that was doping this deliberately, of course we'd support a harsher ban."

Anson said he was also open to a review of age limits in the wake of the Valieva case to protect vulnerable children. "This a global story and a pretty awful one," he said. "The IOC and everyone involved has to act and push this thing as far as they can. It's not easy. I was on the tennis tour when there was the match-fixing scandal in Poland, and we tried to get to the bottom of that in Russia and the policemen who were leading that decided they would not be around if they carried on that investigation."

Anson also admitted that, if Britain was going to call other countries out for doping, it also had to be tough on its own athletes who committed anti-doping rule violations.

"If we're going to sit here and criticise the Russians for the Valieva case, we need to be as tough as [we] possibly can be when doping happens in the UK," he said when asked about GB losing its Tokyo 4x100m relay silver medal after CJ Ujah was found to have banned drugs in his urine.

"If it was down to me personally, someone found guilty of a doping offence would never compete for Team GB again.

"I'm not sure legally I'd always win that battle but that's how I feel about it. We want to send out the clearest possible message that it's unacceptable."

Anson also praised Team Eve Muirhead and Team Bruce Maout, who won women's curling gold and men's curling silver, as Britain finished 19th in the Beijing medal table. "They have really kept us going and happy and positive. The gold medal is just the icing on the cake after a long, long time away from home and it's been well deserved."

'For me the guilty would not compete for Team GB again'

Andy Anson
BOA chief executive

in the bracket-style competition where each round consists of two men and two women going head to head on adjacent courses in a series of four heats. The team with the majority of wins in each match-up advances to the next round while 2-2 deadlocks are decided by the lower combined time of each team's fastest man and fastest woman.

The course is shorter - most of the runs yesterday lasted about 25sec - and even the competitors themselves admit the stakes are considerably lower. But there is no question that a medal could have offered some consolation for Shiffrin amid the lowest period of a professional life defined by dizzying highs.

Shiffrin completed four clean runs down the abbreviated giant slalom course on another morning of high winds and sub-zero temperatures on the south side of Xiaohaituo Mountain. But after winning her opening heat from the lead-off position to help the USA advance past Slovakia, she was placed on the slower red course for the final three match-ups and lost each time.

The full-day postponement

because of 65kph (40mph) gusts at the top of the course on Saturday forced Shiffrin to alter her travel plans, a decision she did not make lightly ahead of the World Cup races in Crans Montana, Switzerland, next week. But the American said the opportunity to cap an Olympic experience that has not always been pleasant alongside her teammates was worth the sacrifice.

"Twenty-four hours makes a really big difference when I think about my individual goals, my personal goals, for the rest of the season," said Shiffrin, who narrowly leads Vlhova atop the leaderboard in pursuit of her fourth overall World Cup crystal globe. "There was absolutely some thought that the 24 hours makes a difference to be still pushing and using that energy. I decided to stay because I wanted to compete with my teammates. I couldn't possibly imagine leaving.

Once a teenage prodigy who became the youngest Olympic slalom champion in history at the Sochi Games, Shiffrin has since blossomed from a specialist into the world's best all-around skier, branching out into the speed events with success and becoming the only skier, male or female, to win World Cup races in all six disciplines.


Her three Olympic medals include gold in slalom in 2014 and in giant slalom in 2018, while her 73 career wins in World Cup races are third-most on the all-time leaderboard, trailing only the Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark (86) and long-time US teammate. Lindsey Vonn (82).

The US completed the alpine skiing programme in Beijing with only one medal out of a possible 30 in individual events: Ryan Cochran-Siegle's surprise silver in the super-G. That matched the country's lowest overall haul at an Olympics since 1998, when Picabo Street's famous super-G gold represented their only medal.

In brief

Skiing


Lindholm suffers frozen penis during 50km race

 The men's 50km mass start skiing race at the Beijing Games was shortened to 30km but that did little to help Finland's Remi Lindholm, who needed a heat pack at the end of the race to thaw out a particularly sensitive body part. Lindholm spent just under an hour and 16 minutes traversing the course in howling, freezing winds, leading to his penis becoming frozen for the second time in a cross-country skiing race, following a similar incident in Ruka, Finland last year. "You can guess which body part was a little bit frozen when I finished ... it was one of the worst competitions I've been in," he told Finnish media. With organisers worried about frostbite during Saturday's race, it was delayed by an hour and shortened by 20km. The thin suits and under-layers worn by racers, as well as plasters

to cover their faces and ears, offered little protection. "When the body parts started to warm up, the pain was unbearable," he added.
Reuters


Ice hockey

Finland finally strike gold after beating ROC

 Finland came from behind to defeat the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) 2-1 in the men's ice hockey final to take an Olympic title for the first time. After being losing finalists twice, the Finns finally struck gold. "This means a lot, first time we made history today, it feels great," said forward Markus Granlund. **AP**

Bobsleigh

Germans slide to victory with another one-two

 After a one-two finish in the women's bobsleigh, with Laura Nolte holding off Mariama Jamanka, Germany extended their historic sliding dominance in Beijing. Francesco Friedrich and Johannes Lochner piloted their four-man teams to another German one-two. **AP**

Draw comfort
England upbeat
after finishing
all square
with Spain



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Up for grabs?
Jonathan
Wilson on a
title race with
fresh intrigue



Page 38 →

The Guardian
Monday 21 February 2022



Sport

Simply 'horrific' BOA hits out over Valieva episode as Team GB strike gold

Sean Ingle
Beijing

The British Olympic Association wants a harsher ban imposed on Russia if it can be proved that its sporting system deliberately doped the 15-year-old skater Kamila Valieva.

Speaking at the end of the Beijing Games, which ended with a gold medal at last for Britain in the women's curling, the BOA chief executive, Andy Anson, described Valieva's treatment as "horrific" and revealed it had lobbied the International Olympic Committee to investigate the skater's entourage one or two days before the IOC decided to act.

Russia was officially banned from the Winter Olympics, although it was allowed to compete under the banner of the Russian Olympic Committee. But Anson indicated that his organisation would back a stiffer punishment if a wider investigation proved Russia wrongdoing.

"The Valieva stuff is horrific," Anson said. "I don't think we can pretend that it's anything other than that. The investigation into everyone around her needs to be thorough and go as deep as it possibly can because what happened there was just completely unacceptable."

Valieva's doping case dominated these Games after her positive test for the banned heart drug Trimetazidine was reported a day after she inspired the Russians to team skating gold. She was then allowed to continue competing by the court of arbitration for sport but, under the most severe pressure, she fell twice in the individual figure skating and finished fourth.

To make matters worse, Valieva was then scolded by her coach, Eteri Tutberidze, as she left the ice in tears - something the IOC president, Thomas Bach, condemned the next morning.

Anson said: "I have to say I've found the IOC very open. We've had discussions. We were pushing at the beginning that the entourage needed thoroughly investigating and a day or two that's what came out. It sounded like they listened."

When asked whether he supported a unilateral ban on Russia, Anson said: "The Sochi doping was clearly systematic and covered the whole team. That deserved to be punished."

"We were very frustrated by the Cas ruling that reduced the ban from four to two years. I still can't understand the logic of reducing that. If the investigation



Team GB's women curlers won Britain's first and only gold in Beijing

City condemn attacks on Foden's family at Khan-Brook boxing event

Jamie Jackson

Phil Foden and the Manchester City player's family were the subject of an abusive attack at Manchester's AO Arena over the weekend which has caused shock at his club, after a video of the incident was circulated on social media.

Foden and a woman believed to be his mother, Claire, were shown in the film being hounded in the backstage area of the venue before they and their entourage entered a private box for refuge.

The woman emerged a moment later and, after a scuffle, is seen being hit by a man, following which a fight occurred.

It is understood that directly

before the episode shown in the footage, Foden - who was attending a boxing event headlined by Amir Khan and Kell Brook at the AO Arena on Saturday night - had been harassed by a group of people whom he had tried to ignore.

A City statement said: "The club is aware of a video which has circulated on social media showing Phil Foden and his family being harassed and abused."

"We are shocked and appalled [by] the nature of the abuse and ensuing assault on one of Phil's family members. We will continue to give Phil and his family all the support and assistance they need."

Foden was one of a contingent of City players at the Khan-Brook fight who had attended following their earlier 3-2 Premier League defeat by Tottenham.

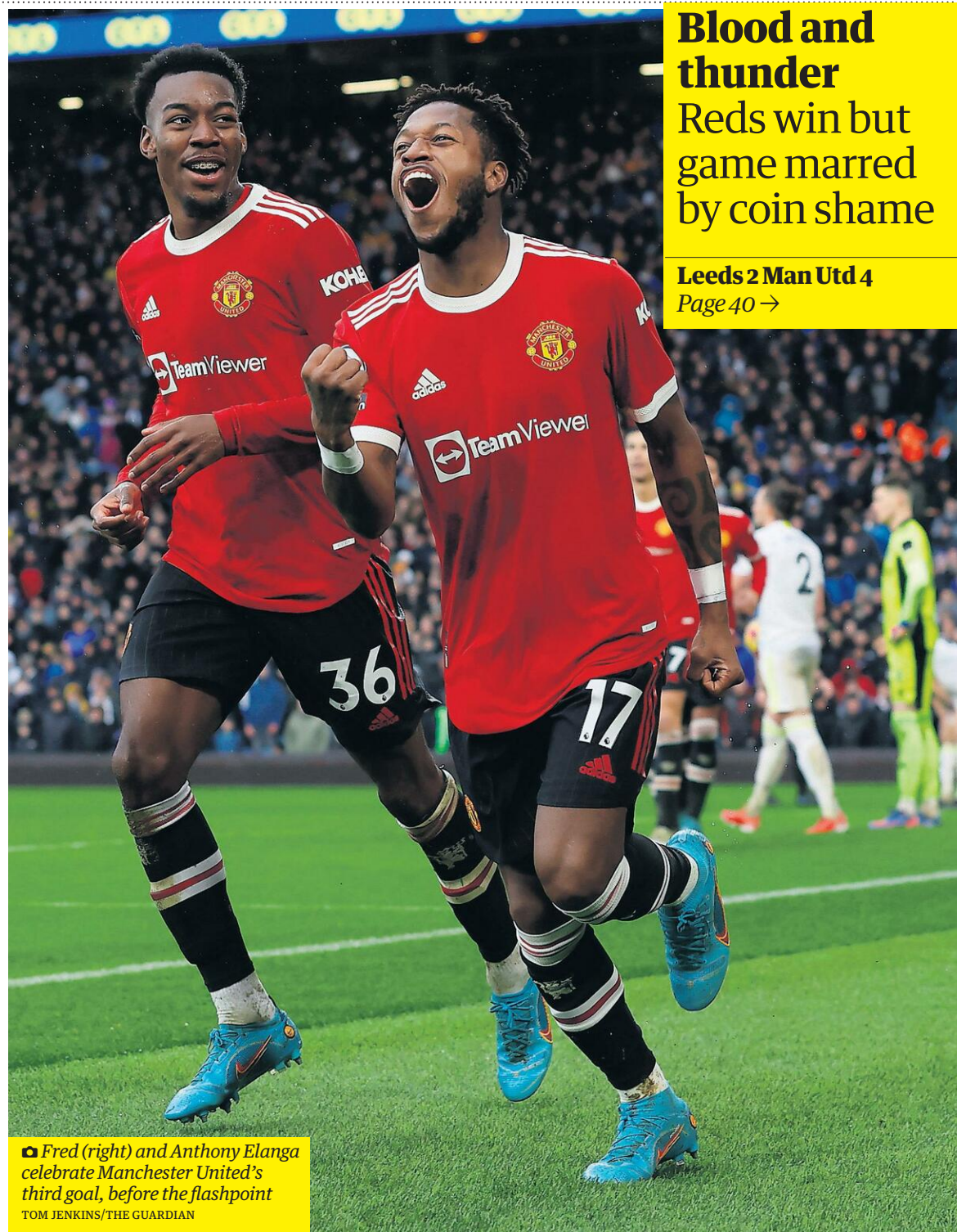
The attack occurred after the bout



Phil Foden (centre) and a family member are harassed in Manchester

**Blood and
thunder**
Reds win but
game marred
by coin shame

Leeds 2 Man Utd 4
Page 40 →



Fred (right) and Anthony Elanga celebrate Manchester United's third goal, before the flashpoint
TOM JENKINS/THE GUARDIAN

and is understood to have caused Foden and his family and friends particular distress due to their view that they were blameless during the incident.

In a statement provided to the Guardian last night, the Greater Manchester Police said: "GMP are aware of a video circulating on social media showing a disturbance at the AO Arena last night (Saturday 19 February 2022)."

"We are conducting some further enquiries into the circumstances surrounding the incident."

It is understood the police have not received any report and so are acting proactively.



“All that
Hollywood
glamour
doesn't feel
like me at all
**Joanna
Scanlan**
on self-doubt,
sexism and
being the red-hot
favourite at
the Baftas



The
Guardian

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Life

& Arts

**'It's a curious
experiment'**

Charlie Brooker
on his latest creation:
a cartoon cat
page 8



**The robots
are coming!**

How androids
are taking
centre stage
page 9



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A new start after 60



‘After 35 years of teaching, I became Magic Frank’

When Frank Farrell’s retirement day came in 2018 – after 35 years of teaching – everyone thought he “would be straight down the pub to celebrate”. Instead, he stayed sober and prepared his materials: the next day he began his new career as a magician. He was 60, and he didn’t yet *feel* like a magician, but that weekend Mr Farrell the English teacher gave way to Magic Frank. Under this stage name, he performed 10 shows at a Harry Potter convention in Manchester. Farrell had been dabbling in magic since his 30s, but the scale of these gigs – he was paid nearly £2,000 – struck him as “a mark of respect” and validation. “I started to consider myself a magician, not someone who does a bit of magic on the side.”

A mentalist who specialises

in card tricks, Farrell performs “parlour shows” at weddings, birthdays or Women’s Institute gatherings. The audience’s gaze is so intense, he feels his hands burn. Applause breaks from this “sense of wonder ... Someone has seen something that logic tells them cannot happen, but which they’ve just seen happen,” he says. “Usually people start laughing. It makes me laugh as well. It feels good.” As a child, Farrell loved magic. The son of Irish immigrants – his father worked in building foundations, his mother as a home help – he grew up in Romford, Essex. Occasionally he trekked to the joke shop on Tottenham Court Road in London to splurge his pocket money on a stink bomb or two, or a device to vanish a ha’penny. “But it fizzled out because there was nothing to nurture it,” he says. “I didn’t know that there’s thousands of books on magic.”

Instead, he got into acting. “I think you can see a theme here,” he says, sounding every inch the English teacher. “A need for an audience.” He reprised the magic in his 30s after he and his wife, Sheila, returned from a trip to India. Sheila had impressed some children with an illusion in which she seemed to pass a thread through her neck. Farrell thought: “When I get home I’ll learn some. It’s a useful thing if there’s children around.” He bought a magic book, practised tricks, even found a magic club in Manchester. He and Sheila had two boys, who were mostly unimpressed by the tricks as children. Farrell never worked his magic at school, except as an activity during enrichment week, when pupils had a chance to learn something different to their normal lessons. In some ways, maybe teaching was another parlour show, though.

Farrell’s style was “a bit offbeat ... I played music. I tried to bring comedy into the classroom.” He put on voices, loved wordplay, and for minor misdemeanours asked students to apologise to his pot plants. At his final summer fair, some of the students wore masks with his face on. Teaching, like magic, is transformative – albeit “a much slower process of transformation”, he says. “With magic you get immediate feedback if it works well. In teaching, that moment might never come. Even if you have had that effect, you might not know.” At first it was a shock to live without a timetable. But Farrell now rehearses for an hour a day, has up to nine bookings in a month, and spends the rest of the time pitching, handling enquiries and deepening his art. He has finally shaken off any sense of being an impostor. “I can genuinely call myself a magician,

because people are paying me to do it.” Needing validation is a theme, he says, but he is unsure why and doesn’t like to “navel gaze”. Maybe it “came from having a very ordinary background”, but he adds: “Don’t we all want to feel special?” The ability to transform and to create wonder are important to Farrell, and I ask what, in himself, has caused him the greatest wonder? “I find the process of becoming older quite amazing,” he answers. “I have discovered that I am far more self-confident, more relaxed ... I am living exactly the type of life I want to live.” When people ask about his retirement, he likes to reply: “I’ve always been happy but never been happier.” **Paula Cocozza** *Tell us: has your life taken a new direction after the age of 60? Fill in the form at theguardian.com/new-start-after-60*



Nick, left,
and Tess in
Stockholm
in 2018

How we met 'She was giving out free footballs. I thought she was really beautiful'

Nick met Tess in Bordeaux while watching Wales in the Euros. But it was only when she made a dash to the airport to see him off that they shared their first kiss

In January 2016, Nick's mother died. He had only been living in Bristol for six months when it happened. "It was difficult because I didn't know many people," he says. A week later, his girlfriend dumped him by text. "It was a really bad time. I'd relocated from my home town of Wrexham to be a theatre operations manager, but I was lonely," he says. He decided to cheer himself up with a trip to France to watch Euro 2016 with a friend. "We weren't able to get tickets, but the city had set up massive fan zones with huge screens for watching the games," he says. "We were supporting Wales in their game against Slovakia." All around, there were promotional stands giving out free merchandise. That's when Nick spotted Tess, a French student who was working as a host at the event.

"She was giving out free footballs, and I thought she was really beautiful," he says. Tess thought Nick was "cute", too. "He tried to convince me to give him a football, but I couldn't because we had a limited supply and children were prioritised." She told him to come back at the end of the day to see if she had any left. "At that point, I stuffed one under my seat so there would be one left," she says. When Nick returned, he asked if she'd like to go for dinner. "I said yes, but wasn't expecting him to remember," says Tess. Like many other supporters, he'd had a few drinks.

They exchanged Facebook details and agreed to meet at a traditional French restaurant the next day. The conversation

flowed easily, but there was no kiss at the end of the night. "I was a bit confused," she admits. The following day, they met for coffee before Nick travelled home, but there was still no kiss. "I was disappointed because I liked him and he was leaving," says Tess.

As she lived near the airport, she decided to give things one last try. "There was only one flight a day to Bristol, so I went to see if I could catch him before he got on the plane," she says. Just as she was about to give up and go home, she spotted Nick. "I was checking in for my flight and thinking about the amazing time I'd had," he says. "It was the first time I'd felt truly happy in months. When I saw Tess, I was blown away." They shared their first kiss at the airport. Over the next few weeks, Nick made two more trips to Bordeaux. By September, they had agreed to give their long-distance relationship a shot.

In 2017, Tess moved to London with a friend, so she and Nick were able to see each other more regularly. The following year, they began making plans to move in together. "We decided to move to Liverpool, as it's cheaper than London, and closer to Nick's family," says Tess. "I was working for Pret a Manger and they were able to transfer my job." Nick joined her, six months later, in early 2019. He now works for the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. That year, Tess proposed on a trip to Edinburgh. "It was meant to be at the castle but the wind was so strong he wouldn't have been able to hear me," says Tess. "The restaurant was noisy, too, so in the end I proposed while watching TV at our B&B." Their wedding was delayed due to Covid, but they plan to marry in Bordeaux this May.

"The thing I love most about Tess is her positivity," says Nick. "She always has a great outlook on life and it's really infectious." Tess appreciates his respectful nature. "From the start, we could have a mature conversation about so many different things. He is so interesting and has so much knowledge. There's nothing we can't talk about."

Lizzie Cernik

Want to share your story? Tell us about yourself, your partner and how you got together at theguardian.com/how-we-met

The 'soul-des

Unable to access credit, many desperate people are turning to loan sharks or illegal lenders on social media. By **Daisy Schofield**

Michelle, 48, a single mother of three, was stressed, vulnerable and broke. She had recently moved to a new area in Tyne and Wear after escaping an abusive relationship, and when her working hours were cut back at the beginning of the pandemic, money became tight. "It was soul-destroying," she says. Desperate, and in need of cash for her son's birthday, she was delighted when another mother at her child's school offered to lend her £50. The woman said she knew what it was like to need a little extra and that she could pay her back next month.

That £50 turned into thousands changing hands, in cash, over several months, with no records kept. "She made it her business to know exactly what days money went in my bank," says Michelle (whose name has been changed). Forced to pay "double bubble" interest (the amount of the original loan, plus the same again on top), Michelle soon found the debt spiralling out of control and loan sharks pursuing her.

"I got to the point of wanting to end everything," says Michelle. "I was suicidal and didn't know

who to go to." The loan shark resorted to intimidation: she was sent threatening messages; people threw things at her house, left unwanted items on her doorstep and smashed the windows. Michelle eventually fled with her children, leaving all her possessions behind, and was placed in temporary accommodation just before Christmas last year. After seeking help from England Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT), she has turned her life around. Her circumstances are far from unusual: two-thirds of the victims IMLT helped last year thought they were borrowing from a friend.

Michelle is one of about 9 million people who have borrowed more than usual since the start of the pandemic, according to the Office for National Statistics. While not every debtor falls prey to loan sharks, feelings of shame and isolation are widespread. Individuals are rarely met with understanding, leading many to blame themselves. But no one is immune to debt. "I would love to think that the pandemic has made us more understanding, but I don't think it has," says Clare Seal, the author of *Five Steps to Financial Wellbeing*. "There's still a misconception that people are in debt because they are wasting money."

The Covid-19 pandemic has divided the nation's wealth like never before. With lockdowns curtailing opportunities to splash out, British households built up their savings to the second-highest level on record at the start of the year. But millions of others have lost jobs or been furloughed, plunging them into debt, while a temporary uplift to universal credit has ended. Since March 2020, more than 11 million people have built up £25bn of arrears and debt to pay for essentials, with a smaller group of households facing severe financial distress.

As Seal points out, the rise in remote working has accelerated this polarisation. "There's a stark divide between people who were

The number of people borrowing from friends has risen since the start of the pandemic



'Destroying' effects of Covid debt



able to work from home - they have saved on travel expenses, maybe moved out to a city that is more affordable, and are now doing hybrid working long-term - and the people who have lost everything.”

“Debt advisers say they have had many first-time callers,” says Laura Whateley, the author of *Money: A User’s Guide*. “Government support has fallen away just as we’re seeing terrifying rises in energy bills, high inflation and no slowdown of soaring house prices and rents ... We’re only just starting to see the impact.”

Seal says that the pandemic has seen a shift away from the type of credit card borrowing that landed her in £27,000 of debt. People are instead turning to buy-now-pay-later platforms, such as Klarna and Clearpay, and salary-advance schemes, which have soared in popularity over the past year. “A change in the way that people borrow isn’t necessarily bad, but these products are unregulated,” she says.

Moreover, the high interest charged on these loans means that, for many, they are a curse instead of salvation. According to Whateley, those with a bad credit rating “are often limited to payday loans or extremely high interest lenders, which can lead you down a path of unmanageable debt”.

The number of people looking to borrow from friends and family has risen since the start of the pandemic, from 5.1 million in February 2020 up to 5.9 million in October 2020. In some cases, people have turned to strangers,

which has helped to cultivate a cottage industry of lenders looking to make extra cash.

On Reddit, DIY money-lending communities have seen a surge of activity since lockdown began in the UK. These online spaces - most notably the subreddit *r/borrow* - allow lenders and borrowers to connect with each other directly, and people turn to the forum as an alternative to payday loans. According to data collected on *r/borrow* by the Consumer Council, the average interest for UK-based requests was 130%, with the average amount borrowed totalling £148. Any registered Reddit user who meets the account criteria can request a peer-to-peer loan by posting on *r/borrow*, bypassing the need for any kind of credit check.

One user of the subreddit is Ryan Buckley, 30, a stay-at-home dad from West Yorkshire, whose bad credit rating left him with

few options during the pandemic. “Having the kids quarantined at home, away from school for more than a year, took its toll on our financial wellbeing,” he says. “We rely on the children having, at minimum, lunch at school. Money just doesn’t stretch as far these days.”

Buckley first turned to the subreddit towards the end of last year for short-term emergency loans - first for £30, and then £100 - over the space of two months. He is now paying back a loan of £200 over two months, which was to help with “general shopping” over the Christmas period.

Borrowers and lenders on the subreddit often share a distrust of traditional banks and lenders, preferring instead the platform’s human element. As Buckley put it: “You’re borrowing from a real person, not a company, somebody who understands situations, lends with compassion and isn’t trying to extort.” Many lenders on the subreddit claim to be motivated by a desire to help people in need, whether it’s providing loans to those looking to top up universal credit or who need help getting by on furlough payments.

But Reddit can be a minefield, and it is not uncommon for a borrower to vanish before repaying a loan. While *r/borrow* has a reputation for being relatively well moderated, on other subreddits - such as *r/loans* and *r/simpleloans* - scamming is even more rife. Abuses by lenders include asking borrowers for unnecessary information for use in scams,

including password information, and access to the borrower’s computer. In some cases, this has led to borrowers being conned out of thousands of pounds. According to the Wales IMLT, which is funded by the Financial Conduct Authority to target illegal money lenders, nearly a third of Reddit’s lenders either had no track record of lending, or were subsequently banned from Reddit due to account violations.

While Reddit has offered to help some, Catherine Williams at IMLT is concerned about how people are borrowing from these online spaces. “Giving out your bank details to someone you don’t know - that’s a terrifying thing to do,” she says. “Even if they are not a loan shark, if you borrow money from an individual, you are not protected.” Although the moderators of the subreddit help to mediate disputes, provide advice and block users who do not adhere to Reddit’s terms of service, ultimately all loans are treated by Reddit as a civil matter.

With regard to the proliferation of money-lending communities on the platform, Reddit says its terms of service “prohibit illegal transactions and we enforce these policies across the platform. We also regularly review subreddits for compliance with our policies. In some instances, we work directly with moderators to ensure users are warned of risks in relevant communities, and many communities impose strict rules and requirements related to user transactions on top of our content policy.”

This form of quick, social-media enabled lending is not limited to Reddit. According to the IMLT, the pandemic has seen an increase in reports of illegal money lenders operating on social media platforms - among them Facebook, Craigslist and Snapchat.

Dating apps have also been used as a platform for illegal lending; Williams describes one case in which a Grindr user shared nude photos with a match, from whom they subsequently borrowed money. The person who lent the money eventually threatened to leak those photos if the borrower refused to keep paying. Likewise, on *r/borrow*, there have been cases of lenders soliciting nude photos as security to ensure payment.

But there are safer alternatives for people unable to turn to banks or who cannot afford the high

interest rates of payday lenders. Credit unions - local organisations where members pool savings to lend to other members - have proved to be a lifeline for many people during the pandemic. There are about 240 credit unions across the UK, with 1.4 million members.

These institutions tend to offer more affordable and lenient repayment terms to those who may struggle to borrow elsewhere. Adam Male, the chief executive officer of Kent Savers Credit Union, says that while they “can’t lend to absolutely everyone”, Kent Savers - like many other credit unions - has “a pretty low bar to entry”. Male says Kent Savers was able to provide support to members unable to repay their loans due to the pandemic. “We’re going to work with the borrower to their advantage, rather than going to a credit department and becoming aggressive.”

This is not to say credit unions are the best option for everyone. “The main downside is that rates can be significantly higher on credit union loans than the loans or credit cards you would get from conventional banks. So usually, it is cheaper to borrow elsewhere,” says Whateley. “But for those who can’t access conventional banks because they don’t have a good credit score, this could be a more affordable option than really high-cost lenders.”

On top of this, credit unions are rarely able to offer the type of emergency, instant loans that can be sourced elsewhere. Their focus, according to Male, is on long-term loans and offering members a “financial education”. This might mean, for example, encouraging members to build a savings habit by depositing a small amount of money each week.

“Credit unions are less in it to make a profit; a lot of the money goes back to the community,” says Seal. But, of course, there is only so much an individual can do when it comes to borrowing. “It’s much easier to look after your financial wellbeing if you have a high level of privilege. People without privilege and without agency are absolutely reliant on government policy.”

To begin to address the Covid debt crisis, Seal says that the government should immediately reintroduce the universal credit uplift and expedite the regulation of buy now, pay later. “Those two changes - one that should never have happened, and one that has been promised for a long time - would make a huge difference,” she says. Until this takes place, more and more people will fall prey to nefarious money lenders, or end up relying on unregulated corners of the internet to make ends meet. Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org

'You have to fight for yourself'

Joanna Scanlan is tipped to win her first Bafta at the age of 60. She talks to **Emine Saner** about having a breakdown, facing sexism - and finding her self-belief

When Joanna Scanlan arrives, she is hidden beneath a yellow raincoat, glasses steamed up, blown through the door as if the gathering storm outside has washed her ashore. "I am so sorry for dragging you out here," she says, laughing slightly hysterically, as she sheds the layers. Scanlan is filming in rural Wales - she, her husband and their dog are renting a cottage nearby - and this cafe, also in the middle of nowhere, was her suggestion. We are the only customers, but there are pots of tea and welsh cakes, and Scanlan is great company, so all is well.

She grew up in Wales, so this job - filming *The Light in the Hall*, a thriller, for which she has had to learn some Welsh - is something of a homecoming. Being here is also a detachment from London, and everything that goes with her job outside of being on set or stage - the bit, you sense, she could take or leave. And so she's a bit distanced from the buzz around her Bafta nomination for best actress for her role in the extraordinary film *After Love*. "When you sit here in Tywi Valley, just learning your lines for tomorrow, it's hard to take that in," she says. "I feel very long in



Quietly devastating ... as Mary in *After Love*

the tooth to be coming to this sort of prominence."

Scanlan, who is 60, came to acting relatively late and her roles have largely been in comedy - she was the brilliantly awful civil servant Terri Coverley in *The Thick of It*, the bolshie DI Viv Deering in *No Offence* and Ma Larkin in *The Larkins*, ITV's recent remake of *The Darling Buds of May*. Getting On, the comedy she wrote with her co-leads Vicki Pepperdine and Jo Brand, is still the funniest and most painful portrayal of the NHS. Although Scanlan has had smaller roles in films, to have her work recognised as the lead in a weighty film feels like a shift. The Baftas - "all that kind of clichéd sort of Hollywood glamour" - doesn't, says

Scanlan, "feel like me at all. I feel like I'm just a working character actor. It's lovely, of course, but it's hard to place yourself inside that." It feels, she says, "surprising".

It won't be a surprise to anyone who has seen Scanlan's quietly devastating performance in *After Love* (the Guardian's critic, Peter Bradshaw, called it "the best of her career so far"). The film has also picked up other nominations, including for its writer and director Aleem Khan, and has been winning awards on the festival circuit. Scanlan has a healthy attitude to the general absurdity of prizes - "you can't quite put the model of sport on to the arts, this sort of runners and riders ... it's not a sport, because it's about how it hits

the heart, and the senses, and that is subjective" - but if the renewed focus on the film means than more people see it, then great.

Scanlan's comedy career seems accidental, even if, alongside *Getting On*, she and Pepperdine wrote another comedy, *Puppy Love*, set in the world of dog training. Drama has always been her love. "I don't want to diss comedy," she laughs. "I've spent my career working in it and I don't want anyone to think that I don't appreciate it. But I guess what I like in comedy is when it is really truthful - and that's not so far from drama." For all that she's warm, generous with her laughter and expressive - her face is beautiful and luminous, hands shooting up to emphasise a point - she is also thoughtful, and takes her work seriously. "I feel like I'm a serious person," she says. "People laugh at me, but it's always when I'm doing something that I didn't intend to be funny. The more earnest I seem to be, the more people laugh at me. I'm not very light. I wish I was; I wish I could just relax."

In *After Love*, Scanlan plays Mary who, in the midst of grief after her husband's sudden death, discovers he has a second, secret family. Khan's skill, making his first feature film, is in packing so much big stuff into a film with a tiny cast, and an almost entirely domestic setting - it covers love, grief, faith (Mary is a Muslim convert), identity, betrayal, class, motherhood. Ahmed, Mary's husband, was a ferry captain and they appeared to have a happy life on the Kent coast - but when she goes through his things, after he dies, she discovers evidence of another woman, Genevieve (played by Nathalie Richard), who lives across the Channel in France. If Ahmed is not who Mary thinks he was - not committed to her, not committed to his faith - then, who, now, is she? Certainty crumbles, like her visions of the white cliffs of Dover collapsing into the sea.

Mary manages to inveigle her way into Genevieve's life in a way that exposes the other woman's prejudices around class, size and devout Muslim women. But Mary also betrays Genevieve's trust. "She finds out she's not as nice a person as she thought she was," says Scanlan. "Confronting who

you actually are, compared with who you want to think of yourself as being, that horrible tension inside her, that was quite tricky to negotiate." She found the shoot, though short, very intense: "That state of betrayal, grief, misery." She would plead, she says, half-smiling, with the producer, begging him to sack her. "And he would say, 'I would sack you, it's just that it does seem to be working.'" She does seem prone to moments of self-doubt: on the TV series she is filming, in which she plays a grieving mother, she found learning Welsh too hard and was about to pull out. Her husband - an accountant - sensibly talked her down, pointing out that the thing about acting she cared most about was stretching herself.

Khan has said that he was interested in bringing a character to the screen who is not often portrayed: "An older woman of a certain size, who wears the headscarf - we never get to see the full interior spectrum of a character like this on screen." The story is fictional but Mary is inspired by Khan's own mother, a white English convert to Islam, who Scanlan spent time with. "He adores his mum and she's so worthy of that adoration - she's a really special person. To him, she was this brilliantly rich, fully 4D person, and he wanted to put that on the screen." Khan is not attached, she says, to received ideas about "what is cinema and what isn't cinema", and the idea of glamour and allure that goes along with it, although, she adds, Genevieve - blond,

Men would come into the bar, stand on the table and urinate into your beer glass



With co-stars in *The Thick of It*; as DI Viv Deering in *No Offence*





*'I try not to be judgmental' ...
Joanna Scanlan
at Aberglasney
Gardens in
Carmarthenshire*

elegant, French - "does represent some of those qualities". But still, Genevieve is a middle-aged woman who is allowed to be sexy. Scanlan agrees: "To me, that doesn't seem abnormal, because I'm old. It doesn't seem abnormal to be sexual, because we still are," she laughs. "But you forget that culture as a whole puts brackets around older women's sexuality, and says that 'this is surprising or aberrant'."

Scanlan grew up in north Wales, where her parents ran a hotel. She had discovered acting at school and went to the University of Cambridge - not her first choice, she says, but she was rejected from everywhere else - because of its drama opportunities. In 1980,

she was one of her college's first intake of women. What was that like? "It was," she says, pausing while she searches for the word, "frankly, an ordeal. I had a few feminist teachers when I was at school who were really influential on me. The feeling [then] was about storming the parapets and getting into environments that we had previously been excluded from." So she liked the thought of joining a pioneering group. "The reality was really different, and that was partly because I had been at a girls' boarding school and did not know anything very much about how to deal with male culture."

Men, she says, "would do things like come into the bar, stand on

the table, pull down their flies, and piss into a beer glass that was on your table". There was sexual harassment, and once a man climbed in through Scanlan's bedroom window - she found him asleep on the floor. It felt, she says, unsafe. For almost the whole of her first year, she hid away. "I just stayed in my room, smoking, drinking, and avoiding everything, avoiding people completely."

She didn't want to be visible, or attract attention from men. "I remember thinking Andrea Dworkin dungarees suddenly seemed like a great idea in that environment," she says. And it meant she didn't put herself forward for drama auditions until

nearly the end of that first year, in which she describes herself as being "almost in shock. I'm not sure everyone had my experience, but I was just very unprepared." She had been sheltered and naive. "It took me until doing therapy in my 30s to actually understand and learn that ..." She pauses. "You have to fight for yourself. It, perhaps, is a slight exaggeration, but no one else is going to be the person who makes sure everything's OK."

She spent her 20s trying to get acting work and getting constantly rejected. In the meantime, she volunteered with community theatre projects, then went to the then Leicester Polytechnic to teach drama, until she had a breakdown. She went back to live with her parents, not able to do much except walk their dog when she felt up to it. "Because I had chronic fatigue syndrome, I had no energy. And that was mental energy, physical energy, emotional energy. It was like a complete battery drain. I remember being able to mark the distinction between the effort required to sit up as opposed to lie down." It was her GP who, realising just how much acting meant to her, suggested she try to make a return to it. Even if she never made it, by conventional standards of success, she would still be happier doing it.

She started working as an administrator for Arts Council England, while writing her own scripts, and was 34 when she got her first professional job, on the TV drama *Peak Practice*. She says she doesn't look at other actors and feel envious: I had asked, jokingly, if there was a sense of relief when Olivia Colman didn't also get nominated for a Bafta. Scanlan laughs, then says: "I thought her performance in *The Lost Daughter* was almost the best performance I've ever seen her give." But there are roles she wished she could have played as a younger actor: "I think theatre is probably where I missed out, and by the time I came back into it, I hadn't developed relationships with theatre directors, and I never really cracked it." But, she says, even when she was 12, she was playing 40-year-olds. "I never had that ingenue quality, so maybe it's a regretful dream that really is a fantasy."

Scanlan seems to have very little vanity, particularly in her work. In *After Love*, especially, her face is raw and close up; there is one moment when she stands in the mirror in her underwear and surveys her body, grabbing her flesh. "The age on the face, and rolls of fat and stretch marks, that's telling the story about this woman's experience," she says. "I do think that our lives are in

“ People always laugh at me when I'm doing something I didn't intend to be funny

our bodies, our experiences, and therefore, whatever that is, I try not to be judgmental about it myself. We get sold this idea that you're totally unacceptable if you don't fit a certain number of female role models - if you're not slim enough, if you haven't had your lips done or whatever. And, then, my experience constantly contradicts that, because when I see somebody, I'm not seeing what's on the outside. Maybe for a fleeting few seconds, but very quickly something else is happening that's speaking so much louder than how they look."

She remembers going to a group therapy session once, where all the other women were conventionally beautiful. "Every one of them spoke about how disempowered they felt, and I suddenly realised, if you get things because people think you're beautiful, then what you think is: 'They don't like me for who I really am.' That must be a very painful place to be."

She is, though, operating within a notoriously sexist, sizeist industry. "I am, but you've got to buck the trend sometimes. I just think there is an appetite - forgive the pun - to look at a wider range of experiences. People are watching this film, they're finding a story that they can relate to. The normative hasn't prevailed in this case." It's real, she says, "it's what other people are. People struggle with their weight, people struggle with their frailties. I'm lucky enough to be in an era where stories are told about people who are ordinary."

Is she confident that there are enough of those roles? "No. But I honestly will take what I'm given." She laughs. "If it doesn't come, it doesn't come. I can't control it." It seems unlikely, of course, that Scanlan won't be in high demand - how gratifying, after everything, to have a career that is racing along - but there is a self-reliance to her. If roles don't go her way, she'll write something (she has a production company with *Pepperdine*), or work in community theatre or dance, or make videos with her phone. "It's more of a real compulsion to be creative, and a huge part of me," she says. "That's why those years when I was not acting or writing, that's why they were agony, and why my life just didn't work."

'Comedy, sci-fi, horror, it's all the same' ...
Charlie Brooker



'Mr Dystopia? That makes me sound like a wrestler'

Black Mirror gave us chilling visions of the near future – but Charlie Brooker's latest creation is a cartoon cat. He talks gaming, politics and nuclear war with **Zoe Williams**

Charlie Brooker is sitting at a desk, a big cardboard box in the background, miscellany spilling out of bookshelves. "What you can't see," he says, since we're on Zoom, "is all the shit all over my desk. I'm shambolic."

He got his first gig doing a comic strip when he was 15, for 80 quid a week; he dropped out of Westminster University as the only dissertation he wanted to write was on video games, and scrambled into a career in journalism – "there was no planning, I wasn't somebody who was out hustling" – via working in a shop and writing video game reviews. He shifted, via Screenwipe, Gameswipe, Newswipe and Weekly Wipe,

into screenwriting, and achieved astonishing success with the anthology series *Black Mirror*. His production company with Annabel Jones, *Broke and Bones*, has just been bought by Netflix for an unspecified sum; the rumour is that it's so enormous that, well, I had to get out a calculator to work out what "nine figures" over five years means (\$100,000,000). I just can't wrap my head around why he still has Billy bookcases from Ikea.

He treats this question respectfully, as is his nature. There's a very deep courtesy under all the swearing. "Check your Ikea catalogue. They're not Billy. They're Kallax." Isn't it ironic, I ask later, that he started a company called *Broke and Bones* which

he then sold for *all the money in the world*? "It's not like they go, 'Here's a pile of money for you,'" he explains. "It's more like, 'that's an investment for you to make things.' Also, I'm so clueless on the business side of things. Probably, if you look at the paperwork, I'm going to get paid in rice."

His first project since signing the new Netflix deal is *Cat Burglar*, a quirky idea and not at all what you'd expect. At heart, it's a love letter to animators Tex Avery and Chuck Jones and the golden age of cartoon making, *Wile E Coyote* and all that. "Not only are the visuals and the sound extremely evocative, extremely true to time," he says, "the visual gags, the pace and the anarchy – those hold up today."



At Glastonbury for the Guardian in 2007 with *Big Brother* contestant Aisleyne Horgan-Wallace

It's bizarre that we've got a shit comedy character running the country. And we let it happen

You get hit by a broom, you smash into a door or your skin falls off, or whatever. They tend to be quite physical and brutal. They're not really about dialogue."

So, a cat is trying to break into a museum for a priceless artwork and a dopey dog is trying to stop him; except there's a twist. Every few minutes, questions will flash up that you have to answer with your remote, "almost like a pub trivia quiz machine", he says. It might be "Words you'd associate with the 90s", or "Which film won the Oscar?" Getting them right or wrong affects the outcome so, "you're controlling the luck of the character, rather than the decisions they're making, if that makes any sense."

It takes about 15 minutes to get to the end but you can cycle through hundreds of possible permutations. "It's a curious experiment," he says, dispassionately, "and I can't quite work out how it will be received. It's not aimed at children, although the idea was it's not necessarily massively off-putting to children." You'll never hear him do a hard sell, even about a show he's actively selling. He has a lab-boffin, it-might-work-it-might-not tone, an experimenter at the frontiers of telly – is it a game, is it a show, would it work better on a console?

Brooker has been interested in interactivity for ages (if there's a message to the viewer in *Cat Burglar*, he says, it's: "You do your bit, mate. Don't just sit there"). His first foray was *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*, in 2018, also for Netflix. This was where he discovered that he could work with the platform, without it sticking its oar in. "That was their first big, interactive drama. It was an expensive proposition, risky, difficult, they wrote loads of code to make it work. Looking back, why didn't they want something like a *Bond* movie? This was very niche: it's about someone writing a game in his head on a Spectrum. The biggest set piece was him walking into WH Smith in 1984. It would have been easy for Netflix to say: 'Could you set this in America, make it a Tandy computer and make it more like *War Games* starring Matthew Broderick? Can it be a bit more glamorous?' There was none of that."

Bandersnatch is incredibly

atmospheric, haunting, even. “From a technical point of view, I was satisfied,” Brooker says, again, quite dispassionately. But originally he wanted it to be like an escape room, with a puzzle at the centre which the viewer would solve by repeatedly failing, each failure delivering another digit in a phone number. “The problem was, and this is a damning indictment of humankind, people couldn’t remember a five-digit number for more than five seconds. So we had to take that out. Which basically meant that you weren’t quite sure when it had finished.”

He takes gaming incredibly seriously, still plays massive, 55-hour games, hates the word “gamer” (“It’s infantilising, isn’t it? You wouldn’t call yourself a ‘filmer’”), and is “always just bewildered by the skill and intelligence that’s gone into a game”. The underpinning philosophy of gaming seems to have permeated his approach to life: try everything, failure is at least half the point, and maybe the most interesting half. It’s a cute paradox that this attitude has begat a huge amount of success, which he tends to shrug off. “I have a strange attitude to success,” he says. “It’s like going to an award ceremony. If you don’t win, it’s a bit of a waste of an evening. If you win it’s nice, but it’s also sort of meaningless.” He’s like an inverted Samuel Beckett. Ever tried? Ever succeeded? No matter. Try again. Succeed again. Succeed better.

Before he was Mr Interactive, Charlie Brooker was Mr Dystopia, creating disturbing, prescient vistas of the very near future. What if the prime minister had to have sex with a pig, live on air? What if anxious modern parenting turned into 24-hour hyper-surveillance? Even Nathan Barley, his 2005 comedy co-written with Chris Morris, came eerily to pass. That eponymous, portfolio-careered hipster could have been written yesterday. “That makes me sound like a wrestler,” Brooker says, not without satisfaction. “A really mean, horrible wrestler. Here he comes, in the blue corner: Mr Dystopia.”

It’s not so much that he predicted things, and then they happened, he says. Rather, Black Mirror plots were “extrapolations of whatever was already

happening”. The pig plot was inspired by Gordon Brown’s Gillian Duffy moment, when he called a Labour voter a bigoted woman and “had to go and apologise, and it became this bizarre circus of calamity. I was just watching it thinking, ‘No one’s in charge here.’”

Brooker is 50. Growing up near Reading in the 70s and 80s, he had - in common with the lot of us - a powerful terror of nuclear apocalypse, coupled with the more idiosyncratic phobia of vomiting, which he has to this day. He drolly describes the way these fears combined in his childhood mind. “The thing that terrified me more than anything else was that if you survived the blast you got radiation sickness. Oh no! There’s a bomb that would give me a bad tummy? I wasn’t really thinking about the big picture.” In that context, he remembers taking comfort from shows such as Spitting Image, thinking that if the adults are joking about it, it’ll probably be OK.

“Then, on 2016 Screen Wipe, we had some jokes about Trump, who had just been elected and started casually talking about a nuclear bomb. I was in that position as the adult, being funny and reassuring. But I was shitting myself.”

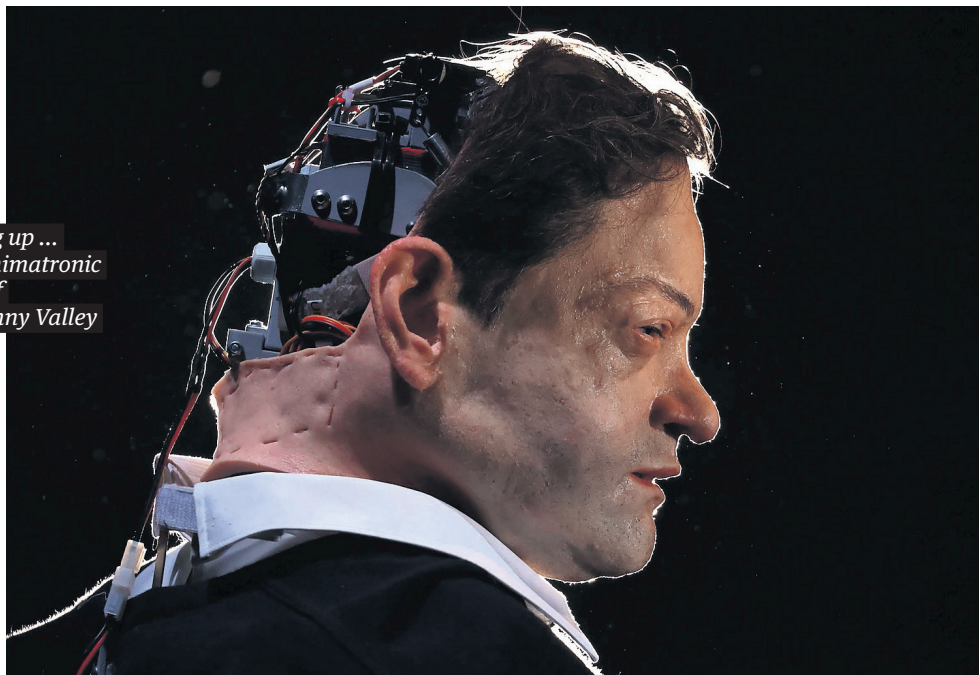
Rumblings, amorphous anxieties continue to plague him, but always laced with this sense of the absurd that keeps him, well, more than sane, happy. “In the UK, because I’ve been known for writing acerbic columns and comedies, people know that I’m not taking myself that seriously. Then I get to the US and they think I’m the king of dystopia. But still in my head, it’s all the same stuff. Comedy, horror and sci-fi are such close bedfellows.”

He’s sick of one thing, though: the jokes should have stayed on the screen, or the page; they should never have migrated to politics. “It is bizarre that we’ve got Keith Lemon running the country. We’ve got a character, a shit comedy character, running the country. And we let that happen. Our generation let that happen. They are us! They’re our peers. Fucking hell.” An interactive drama, in which you can rid politics of ludicrous, empty characters: that I would watch (or play) for ever. *Cat Burglar is available on Netflix from tomorrow*



‘It’s a curious experiment’ ...
Cat Burglar

Acting up ...
the animatronic
star of
Uncanny Valley



Crude mechanicals

A century ago, a play gave us the word ‘robot’. Now, in two new productions, androids are taking to the stage. **Natasha Tripney** meets their creators

A figure sits alone on stage dressed in comfy jumper and trousers, one leg crossed over the other. He slowly moves his hands and turns his head. But this sole performer in Uncanny Valley, by theatre company Rimini Protokoll, is not human. It is a lifelike animatronic model of the German writer Thomas Melle.

The show’s director, Stefan Kaegi, had seen animatronics used in museums, where he found there was not sufficient time for what he calls the “empathy mechanism” to kick in. But he wondered what would happen if the robot became a performer, “someone with whom we start to identify”. His idea was to create a monologue for a robot that looked as human as possible - not perfect but average and fragile. Evi Bauer, who worked on the robot’s design, suggested that the best way was to find a human subject and make a copy.

The question was who?

Melle had recently published *The World at My Back*, a philosophical exploration of his bipolar disorder that Kaegi had found intriguing. Melle, in turn, liked the idea of being made into a robot.

The costume department

at the Munich Kammerspiele theatre company took a silicone cast of Melle’s head - a claustrophobic process documented in the production - and then there were, says Kaegi, some “spooky moments” for Melle meeting his robotic doppelganger. The result is undeniably disconcerting. Even though its inner workings are visible through a gap in the back of the robot’s head, its movements are delicate and somehow tender.

Science fiction often shows us technology taking over, but Kaegi needed to programme the robotic Melle’s every movement: “I wasn’t working with an artificial intelligence. I was working with a very dumb machine.” But then, he says, all of theatre is an exercise in programming, from lighting to sound. People, too, are largely preprogrammed in the ways we behave, including our routines and our small talk. The show asks how free we really are: “How dependent have we become not only on technical devices, but on algorithms that help us to take decisions?”

The word “robot” was introduced into the English language by a play: *RUR* (Rossum’s Universal Robots), a 1920 drama by the Czech writer Karel Čapek. And in the 100 years

since, they have become a staple of film and television. From *Star Trek: The Next Generation* to *The Terminator*, robots in pop culture are usually there, Kaegi observes, to play on our fears of technology taking control or as a way of exploring our own humanity.

Despite, or perhaps because, of their un-humanness, performance makers have explored robots’ theatrical potential in numerous ways. The Serbian choreographer Dragana Bulut’s *Future Fortune* has dancers interacting with a humanoid robot, and the Japanese director Oriza Hirata’s *Robot Theatre Project* uses robot performers alongside human actors. Last year, to mark the centenary of *RUR*, a team of Czech scientists and dramaturges created a new play written by computer. (The result had lots of repetitive dialogue and a preoccupation with sex.)

Tim Foley’s *Electric Rosary*, which opens at Manchester’s Royal Exchange in April, is set in a convent whose nuns welcome a robotic sister into their order. The idea for the play came to Foley on a visit to a monastery with his father, where he saw the ageing monks using quad bikes. He imagined a scenario where the nuns bring a robot in to do the cooking and cleaning, but it “starts to get something out of it”. This robot is designed to learn by example so Foley explores not just the behaviour of other characters but “the agency and humanity that robots are developing themselves”.

One of the reasons robots don’t feature as often on stage as on screen, Foley suggests, is a practical one. Without access to CGI, you have to either create a robot - as in *Spillikin* - or have an actor play one. Each presents different challenges. For *Electric Rosary*, they opted for the latter approach. There won’t be an attempt to make the performer look like a robot using masks. Instead, Foley says, “it’s through speech and movement that she’ll show her artificial manner. But as time passes and she adapts to requirements, she’ll begin mimicking what it is to be human, and then potentially mastering it”.

Foley’s robot is a dramatic catalyst, a way of exploring the nature of faith. “If the idea is we’re constructed by a higher power,” he asks, “are we then a form of artificial intelligence? If we’re made in the image of God and a robot is made in ours, is there a hierarchy here? Or will we be equal in the eyes of God?” *Uncanny Valley is at Battersea Arts Centre, London, from tomorrow until Saturday; Electric Rosary is at Royal Exchange, Manchester, 23 April to 14 May*



Cuphead and Mugman in The Cuphead Show!

Review The Cuphead Show!, Netflix

Underwhelming video game finds its perfect form on TV

★★★★☆

Stuart Heritage



Few video games in recent years have managed to equal the sledgehammer disappointment of Cuphead. For those of you not in the know, Cuphead was an independent 2017 game that captured gamers' imagination like little else before.

This was almost entirely down to how it looked. An out-and-out love letter to 1930s cartoonists such as Max Fleischer and Grim Natwick – with a main character inspired by a 1936 Japanese propaganda cartoon about an invasion of an evil Mickey Mouse army – Cuphead thrummed with a gloriously authentic Betty Boop feel. The animations were hand-drawn and imperfect. The big-band jazz soundtrack was recorded on analogue. The voices crackled and hissed as if recorded from worn vinyl. No detail was spared, to the extent that the creators had to remortgage their home to pay for it. And people fell for Cuphead hard. After some footage was shown as proof of concept, anticipation hit fever pitch and stayed there for three years.

But then the game came out, and it sort of sucked. It might have looked and sounded beautiful, but it was crippling difficult to play. One reviewer noted that he had died 188 times during the game. It seemed like a wasted opportunity.

Despite this, the kernel of Cuphead remained irresistible. The characters were so engaging, and the aesthetic so beautiful, that a small cottage industry sprang up around it. You might not be able to get past the level where you have to steal the soul from a giant

onion (long story), but you could still buy Cuphead dolls and Cuphead books, and you could visit YouTube and watch a seemingly limitless number of users create no end of Cuphead songs, cartoons and comparison videos. The game might have caused you to rip out your hair in frustration, but the characters were too charming to be dismissed.

Which brings us to The Cuphead Show!, in which the Cuphead characters are given their own series of 15-minute cartoons. It might sound complicated – a cartoon based on a game based on a different cartoon – but go along with it. Because The Cuphead Show! feels like Cuphead reaching its most perfect form.

The show sees Cuphead (a headstrong and cocky sentient cup) and his brother Mugman (in effect, a differently coloured Cuphead created solely to allow a two-player mode on the game, here beefed up into a cowardly Luigi type) as they blunder through a succession of wacky misadventures. While there's a loose nod to the game's plot – in which Cuphead and Mugman lose their souls by gambling with the devil, who in turn forces them to chase down his debtors – this is by no means a dramatisation.

Instead, The Cuphead Show! is a collection of standalone cartoons that have fun splashing around in the tropes of the era its animation was inspired by. This is the sort of cartoon where characters find babies abandoned by their front door, where radio antennas broadcast concentric circles and morse code, where down-and-outs still have the self-esteem to dress themselves in raggedy suits. It is at once a giddy genre exercise and something that your kids would happily watch. For the most part, that is. There's one scene near the end of the series, where the devil mutates into a series of wild animals, that has the potential to ruin a couple of bedtimes. But, again, for a show that harkens back to a time where entertainment wouldn't hesitate to scare kids, that's probably par for the course.

Weirdly, though, Cuphead's period frills don't feel quite as authentic on TV. This is partly a tonal thing. Cuphead the game was so rigorously 1930s in its outlook that one of the levels saw him standing in an ashtray, fighting a barrage of cigars and cigarettes, and that would obviously be unthinkable to place in a children's TV show in the 21st century. But it's also down to execution, too. Although the surface touches are there – the screen is flecked with dust marks – the characters often carry the sterile perfection of computer animation, while the voices are recorded a little too cleanly. Obviously, two and a half hours of hand-drawn animation would be prohibitively expensive, but for a property that prides itself on authenticity, it can sometimes take you out of the moment a little.

These are just niggles, though. All in all, The Cuphead Show is an overwhelming success. It's fast and funny and knowing, and you almost certainly won't die 188 times watching it. What's not to like?

Starstruck 10pm, BBC Three



It's New Year's Eve and Tom (Nikesh Patel) is throwing a star-studded party – the kind where, when Jessie (Rose Matafeo) says she works in a cinema, fellow guests assume she means “in the film industry”. Tom's incredibly drunk and unbearable brother is also there and, inevitably, causes problems. Will there be a kiss at the stroke of midnight? With this topsy-turvy romcom, a happy ending never seems straightforward.

Hollie Richardson

Rise of the Nazis: Dictators at War 9pm, BBC Two

This three-part series continues to drill down into the psychology of the dictators involved in the second world war. Tonight, the horrors of the eastern front are assessed via the feverish minds of Hitler and Stalin. **Phil Harrison**

Jobfished 9pm, BBC Three

Did working from home during the pandemic enable a great job scam? In this gripping documentary, Catrin Nye speaks to the work-hungry people who claim they were recruited by a flashy ad agency, only to find out months later that it wasn't what it claimed to be – and that its co-founder didn't exist. **HR**

Couples Therapy 10pm, BBC Two

An elusive, frustrating session with Dr Orna Guralnik, full of relationships in which the couple concerned can't identify the exact issue that is causing them problems. It's still compelling, however, especially

when Guralnik steps in and makes a firm intervention, as she does with Elaine, a woman who feels her husband doesn't prioritise her needs. **Jack Seale**

Moors Murders: The Witness 9pm, Channel 4

Is there anything more to be said about two of history's most notorious serial killers? The makers of this three-part documentary about Ian Brady and Myra Hindley think so, offering analysis of previously unseen prison letters. Tonally, it is often uncomfortable to watch. **HR**

Euphoria 10.05pm, Sky Atlantic

It's nice when Euphoria remembers that it's a show about school. Tonight, it's a term-time staple: the school play. Lexi has taken time-honoured advice and written what she knows, but how will her classmates react? It's an ambitious, exhilarating hour – with a show-stopping musical number – and a lovely turn in the spotlight for the often-overlooked Lexi. **Henry Wong**



And another thing

For a video game adaptation aimed at a slightly older audience, try Netflix's Arcane.

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.15** Morning Live (T) **10.0** Fraud Squad (T) **10.45** The Moment of Proof (T) (R) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News (T) **1.45** Doctors (T) **2.15** Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators (T) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) **3.45** Garden Rescue (T) **4.30** Antiques Road Trip (T) (R) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News (T) **7.0** The One Show (T) **7.30** Panorama (T)

8.0 **EastEnders** (T) Kheerat tries to get Gray to admit the truth. **8.30** **Kelvin's Big Farming Adventure** (T) The family decide to hold a farm-warming party. Last in the series. **9.0** **Chloe** (T) Becky's web of lies begins to crumble. Last in the series.

10.0 **News** (T) **10.25** **Regional News** (T) Weather **10.35** **Imagine: Wayne McGregor – Dancing on the Edge** (T) Alan Yentob talks to Wayne McGregor, the resident choreographer at the Royal Ballet. **12.0** **The Wall** (T) (R) **12.45** The Graham Norton Show (T) (R) **1.35** Weather **1.40** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Escape to the Country** (T) (R) **7.15** Garden Rescue (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Inside the Factory (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics Live (T) **1.0** Ready Steady Cook (T) (R) **1.45** Eggheads (T) (R) **2.15** Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is (T) (R) **3.0** The Heights (T) (R) **3.30** Heir Hunters (T) (R) **4.15** Further Back in Time for Dinner (T) (R) **5.15** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) **6.30** Great Coastal Railway Journeys (T) **7.0** Yorkshire Firefighters (T) (R)

8.0 **Mastermind** (T) Subjects include Grace Kelly and the Brother Cadfael books. **8.30** **University Challenge** (T) The quarter-finals continue. **9.0** **Rise of the Nazis: Dictators at War** (T) Hitler takes charge of the German army after losing the battle for Moscow, while Stalin does the same with the Red Army.

10.0 **Couples Therapy** (T) Dr Orna Guralnik presses Elaine to face her past. **10.25** **Natural World: Penguin Post Office** (T) (R) **10.30** **Newsnight** (T) Weather **11.15** **FILM** **Entebbe** (2018) (T) **12.55** **Countryfile** (T) (R) **1.55** Fraud Squad (T) (R) **2.40** Fraud Squad (T) (R) **3.25** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** Loose Women (T) **1.30** News and Weather (T) **1.55** Local News and Weather (T) **2.0** Dickinson's Real Deal (T) (R) **3.0** Lingo (T) (R) **3.59** Local News and Weather (T) **4.0** Tipping Point (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News and Weather (T) **7.0** Emmerdale (T) **7.30** Coronation Street (T)

8.0 **Bradley & Barney Walsh: Breaking Dad** (T) The actor and his son head to Norway. Last in the series. **8.30** **Coronation Street** (T) Chesney refuses to let Linda whisk Joseph away. **9.0** **No Return** (T) The date of the court hearing finally arrives and Noah's appeal is quickly rejected.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather **10.30** **Local News** (T) Weather **10.45** **Secrets of the Krays** (T) (R) Ronnie and Reggie Kray's dramatic downfall. Last in the series. **11.45** **All Elite Wrestling: Dynamite** **1.25** **Shop: Ideal World** **3.0** Loose Women (T) (R) **3.50** Unwind With ITV **5.05** Tipping Point (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.05 **Countdown** (T) (R) **6.45** Cheers (T) (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond (T) (R) **9.0** Frasier (T) (R) **10.30** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (T) (R) **11.25** News (T) **11.30** Coast vs Country (T) (R) **12.30** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** A Place in the Sun (T) (R) **4.0** A New Life in the Sun: Where Are They Now? (T) **5.0** Four in a Bed (T) **5.30** Come Dine With Me (T) **6.0** The Simpsons (T) (R) **6.30** Hollyoaks (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **The Great Cookbook Challenge With Jamie Oliver** (T) The final six cooks create two dishes to try to impress the judges. **9.0** **Moors Murders: The Witness** (T) New series. Analysis of never-before-seen letters from Ian Brady and Myra Hindley, written over their five decades in prison.

10.0 **999: What's Your Emergency?** (T) (R) **11.0** **I, Sniper: The Washington Killers** (T) **12.20** **Kitchen Nightmares USA** (T) (R) **1.10** Couples Come Dine With Me (T) (R) **2.05** Undercover Boss Canada (T) (R) **2.55** Grayson's Art Club (T) (R) **3.50** Unreported World (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **12.15** Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords (T) (R) **1.10** News (T) **1.15** Home and Away (T) (R) **1.45** Neighbours (T) **2.15** **FILM** Honeymoon of Death (Lane Shefter Bishop, 2019) (T) **4.0** Celebrity 5 Go Camping (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Neighbours (T) (R) **6.30** Eggheads (T) **7.0** Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders (T) (R) **7.55** News (T)

8.0 **Traffic Cops** (T) A teenage joyrider leads Stuart Smith on a 100-mile chase. Includes news update. **9.0** **Police: Night Shift 999** (T) Officers are called to a fight in a takeaway, the occupants of a car abandon the vehicle after a hit-and-run, and bouncers are racially abused by a passerby.

10.0 **Casualty 24/7: Every Second Counts** (T) (R) A keen gardener arrives with an agonising back injury. **11.05** **999: Critical Condition** (R) **12.05** **A&E After Dark** (T) (R) **1.0** The Live Casino Show (T) **3.10** Dogs Behaving (Very) Badly (T) (R) **4.0** Britain's Greatest Bridges (T) (R) **4.45** Wildlife SOS (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Gareth Edwards' Great Welsh Adventure** (T) (R) The rugby legend and wife Maureen take charge of a narrowboat on the Llangollen Canal. **7.30** Fred Dibnah's Made in Britain (T) (R) A former pumping station in Sunderland.

8.0 **Timeshift: How to Write a Mills & Boon** (T) (R) Author Stella Duffy sets out to produce her own novel for the publisher. **9.0** **The Romantics and Us With Simon Schama** (T) (R) The historian explores how the Romantics became the first intrepid explorers of the human mind.

10.0 **Desperate Romantics** (T) (R) **12.0** **Botticelli's Venus: The Making of an Icon** (T) (R) **12.30** Gareth Edwards' Great Welsh Adventure (T) (R) **1.0** Fred Dibnah's Made in Britain (T) (R) **1.30** Timeshift: How to Write a Mills & Boon (T) (R) **2.30** The Romantics and Us With Simon Schama (T) (R)

Other channels

Dave
7.10 Yianni: Supercar Customiser **8.0** American Pickers **9.0** Storage Hunters UK **10.0** American Pickers **11.0** Travel Man: 48 Hours in Hong Kong **12.0** Top Gear **1.0** Cops on the Rock **2.0** Travel Man: 48 Hours in Dubai **2.30** Travel Man: 48 Hours in Berlin **3.0** Rick Stein: From Venice to Istanbul **4.0** Top Gear: Ambitious But Rubbish **5.0** Rick Stein: From Venice to Istanbul **6.0** Taskmaster **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Room 101 **8.20** Would I Lie to You? **9.0** QI XL **10.0** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.0** Mel Giedroyc: Unforgivable **12.0** Comedians Giving Lectures **12.40** Room 101 **1.20** Would I Lie to You? **2.0** Red Dwarf: The First Three Million Years **3.0** Dave Gorman: Modern Life Is Goodish

The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** Married at First Sight Australia **9.0** The Real Dirty Dancing **10.20** Married at First Sight Australia **10.55** Celebrity Gogglebox **11.55** First Dates **1.0** Married at First Sight Australia **2.30** Married at First Sight Australia **3.0** The Real Dirty Dancing **4.10** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **5.0** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA
Film4
11.0am **FILM** The Furies (1950) **1.15** **FILM** The League of Gentlemen (1960) **3.30** **FILM** The Cassandra Crossing (1976) **6.20** **FILM** Star Trek: The Motion Picture (1979) **9.0** **FILM** Angel Has Fallen (2019) **11.20** **FILM** Downsizing (2017) **2.05** **FILM** **The Neon Bible** (1995)
ITV2
6.0am Secret Crush **7.0** The Ellen DeGeneres Show **8.0** You've Been Framed! Goes Savage! **9.0** Secret Crush **10.0** **FILM** The Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas (2000) **11.50** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **12.0** Supermarket Sweep **1.0** Celebrity Tipping Point **2.0** Rolling in It

3.0 The Ellen DeGeneres Show **4.0** The Masked Singer US **5.0** You've Been Framed! Gold **5.30** You've Been Framed! Gold **6.0** Celebrity Catchphrase **7.0** Superstore **8.0** Bob's Burgers **9.0** Family Guy **10.0** The Stand Up Sketch Show **10.30** Family Guy **11.30** Crossing Swords **12.30** American Dad! **1.25** Bob's Burgers **1.50** Bob's Burgers **2.20** Superstore **3.10** Unwind With ITV
More4
8.55am A Place in the Sun **9.35** A Place in the Sun: Home Or Away **10.35** Find It, Fix It, Flog It **12.35** Heir Hunters **1.35** Four in a Bed **4.15** The Hotel Fixers **4.50** Find It, Fix It, Flog It **6.55** Escape to the Chateau: DIY **7.55** Grand Designs **9.0** The Pennines: Backbone of Britain **10.0** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces **11.05** 24 Hours in A&E **12.05** Emergency Helicopter Medics **1.10** The Pennines: Backbone of Britain **2.15** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces **3.20** Father Ted
Sky Max
6.0am Stargate SG-1 **7.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Supergirl **9.0** DC's

Legends of Tomorrow **10.0** The Flash **11.0** NCIS: New Orleans **1.0** Hawaii Five-0 **2.0** S.W.A.T **3.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **4.0** Supergirl **5.0** The Flash **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **7.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Flintoff: Lord of the Fries **9.0** Agatha Raisin **10.0** Agatha Raisin **11.0** A Discovery of Witches **12.0** The Force: Manchester **1.0** Road Wars **2.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Stop, Search, Seize

Sky Arts
6.0am Handel: La Resurrezione **7.40** Ludovico Einaudi: Elements - Live **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Discovering: Maximilian Schell **11.0** Discovering: Little Richard **11.30** Discovering: The Clash **12.0** The South Bank Show Originals **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** Discovering: Robert Taylor **3.0** Landscape Artist of the Year 2022 **4.0** Discovering: Tina Turner **4.30** Discovering: Iggy Pop **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **6.0** Discovering: Montgomery Cliff **7.0** André Rieu: Welcome to My World **8.0** The Big Design Challenge **9.0** André Rieu: And

the Waltz Goes On **12.0** Three Tenors: From Caracalla to the World **2.0** My Greatest Shot: Travel **2.30** My Greatest Shot: Food **3.0** Inside Art: Linda McCartney Retrospective **3.30** Why Do We Dance? **4.45** National Trust: National Treasures
Sky Atlantic
6.0am Urban Secrets **7.55** CSI: Crime Scene Investigation **8.50** The Newsroom **10.15** Riviera **12.15** Game of Thrones **1.20** Gomorrah **3.25** Ray Donovan **5.40** The Sopranos **8.0** Game of Thrones **9.0** Billions **10.05** Euphoria **11.10** The White Lotus **12.25** Gomorrah **1.30** In Treatment **2.0** The Gilded Age **3.05** Babylon Berlin **4.05** Urban Secrets **5.0** Urban Secrets



Radio

Radio 3
6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Respighi (1/5) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. Live from Wigmore Hall, horn player Ben Goldscheider and pianist Richard Uttley play Dukas, Glazunov, Rachmaninov and Jane Vignery. **2.0** Afternoon Concert. The Prague Symphony Orchestra in Dvořák's Violin Concerto. **4.30** New Generation Artists. James Newby sings Schumann's Dichterliebe. **5.0** In Tune **7.0** In Tune Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Michael Francis conducts the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Szymanowski Quartet and soprano Iwona Sobotka in Ravel's Ma Mère L'Oye Suite, Szymanowski's 6 Songs of the Fairytale Princess and String Quartet No1 in C Op 37, and Holst's The Planets Suite. **9.30** Northern Drift. With Clare Shaw and Robin Richards. **10.0** Music Matters (R) **10.45** The Essay: The Well-Tempered Clavier. Armando Iannucci presents the first of five essays celebrating JS Bach's collection. (1/5) **11.0** Night Tracks **12.30** Through the Night

Radio 4
6.0am Today **9.0** Start the Week. Pankaj Mishra, Joseph Sassoon and Susan Newman discuss money, power and class. (7/12) **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Metaphysical Animals. By Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman. (1/5) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** Jobfished **11.30** Loose Ends (R) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** Violets. By Alex Hyde. (1/5) **12.18** You and Yours **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** The Shadow of Algiers. Stories from France's troubled history with Algeria. (1/5) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Trip the Light Fantastic. By Miriam Battye. (R) **3.0** Counterpoint (9/13) **3.30** The Food Programme (R) **4.0** The Canon Wars (R) **4.30** The Digital Human. People who were kicked off mainstream social media platforms after the 6 January riots. (1/6) **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** Just a Minute. Hosted by Sue Perkins. (1/6) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.0** Frontline **8.30** Analysis. Building new homes without

alienating voters. (4/9) **9.0** The Coming Storm: Welcome to the Future (R) **9.30** Start the Week (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Violets (R) **11.0** Word of Mouth (R) **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.0** News and Weather **12.30** Metaphysical Animals (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Farming Today **5.58** Tweet of the Day (12/265)

Radio 4 Extra
6.0am Paul Temple and the Margo Mystery (6/8) **6.30** The Same River Twice (1/8) **7.0** Boswell's Lives (1/4) **7.30** The Unbelievable Truth (6/6) **8.0** Marriage Lines (13/13) **8.30** Boogie Up the River (3/6) **9.0** Wordaholics (2/6) **9.30** Arrested Development (1/4) **10.0** Journey to the Centre of the Earth (1/2) **11.0** Ted Radio Hour (43/48) **11.50** Inheritance Tracks **12.0** Marriage Lines (13/13) **12.30** Boogie Up the River (3/6) **1.0** Paul Temple and the Margo Mystery (6/8) **1.30** The Same River Twice (1/8) **2.0** The Two of Us: My Life With John Thaw (1/5) **2.15** Maya Angelou (1/5) **2.30** Conjuring Halie **3.0** Journey to the Centre of the Earth (1/2) **4.0** Wordaholics (2/6) **4.30** Arrested Development (1/4) **5.0** Boswell's Lives (1/4) **5.30** The Unbelievable Truth (6/6)



Where is the payback after two years of Covid sacrifices? *John Harris, page 3*

A proxy war in Ukraine is a fool's errand *Simon Tisdall, page 4*

Jan Pieńkowski, illustrator of the Meg and Mog books *Obituaries, page 6*

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The Guardian **Monday 21 February 2022**

Opinion
and ideas

Journal



Scared to be woke? It's time for progressives to take a stand

Nesrine Malik



There are two lines of attack in the culture wars. The first is slow, steady and discreet, marching by stealth through Britain's institutions. The second is a brazen, loud artillery attack armed with clichés and buzzwords that are fired out across the media. The recent speech from the Conservative party chair, Oliver Dowden, to the Heritage Foundation in Washington is an example of the latter. It was a word salad into which he lazily and dispassionately (repeating this stuff must get very boring) tossed a list of vague concepts such as “cancel culture”, “woke psychodrama”, “obsessing over pronouns” and attempts to “decolonise mathematics”.

If the purpose of this kind of quick-fire attack is recruitment, then the slower, more covert attacks are for annexation. An example of the latter also came recently in the form of new guidance by the Department for Education on political impartiality in England's classrooms. Topics such as empire, racism and the climate crisis were singled out as “political issues” to be treated with care, moving the parameters of what teachers and students perceive as “neutral” and what is “ideological” another inch to the right.

This side of the culture wars takes its time to cover ground by influencing education and culture. Those advancing this line of attack in government often act behind closed doors; by the time their goals are made public it's too late to challenge them. Last month, the government announced that BBC funding from the licence fee would be frozen for two years, raised concerns about the BBC's “impartiality and groupthink”, and said its public funding model could be abolished (though it later softened its stance).

Of recent wins, the expropriation and ubiquitisation of the word “woke” has been the quickest. Most people don't actually know what “woke” means. But, to quote Will Ferrell in *Blades of Glory* explaining the nonsensical lyrics to a song: “Nobody knows what it means but it's provocative. It gets the people going.” All that matters is people pick up on its implications.

Different permutations of “wokeness” have always been useful, leveraged by the right to portray any social change as an unhinged vandalism to the status quo. This is not a new tactic (little in the culture wars is): wokeness is the new “loony left” or “PC gone mad”, a swapping of terms to portray the left as an absurdity and threat which has been around since at least the 1950s.

ILLUSTRATION:
MATT KENYON

2

Scared to be woke? It's time for progressives to take a stand

Nesrine Malik

← Continued from front

What's frustrating is that for a tactic that has been used for so long, progressive politicians still do not understand that the only way to beat the charge is to own it - to say when confronted with an issue presented as a matter of wokeness: "What do you mean by woke?" To expose and mock the term for its threadbareness, or to question its very pejorative use. I'll take anything really at this point, as long as it is delivered with authenticity and swagger. Imagine hearing a politician say something like: "If by 'woke' you mean ending racism and inequality, reforming our curriculums so that they are factual and representative both of historical truth and how Britain is changing, and striving for a world where your chances in life are determined as little as possible by your birth, then sign me up." I would think I was hallucinating.

The signal the left sends by letting the term be claimed by the right is so powerful that Labour politicians are now in the bizarre position of denying the existence of the culture wars while being simultaneously afraid of being called woke. In an interview with the Telegraph earlier this year, Labour's shadow culture secretary, Lucy Powell, showed how cornered and defeated progressives can be by letting the term "woke" go uncontested, while being pinned down by its assaults. She said there is a lot of "false division" created by the right on matters such as statues that she would not indulge as culture secretary. She then fell into the biggest false division of all. "I wouldn't say I'm woke. I'm not woke, but I'm not anti-woke either," she said, like Schrödinger's cat. "I'm just kind of fairly ordinary. I will absolutely sort of cry my eyes out at Strictly Come Dancing where a deaf woman wins it and a same-sex couple are the runners-up. I think that was a fantastic kind of illustration of where woke and anti-woke meet."

Don't laugh - "woke and anti-woke" is a good summary of Labour's response to the culture wars. It's risk avoidance. What it means is that the party is taking the moral high ground on the basis that it cares only about tangible issues that impact people's lives in a strict economic sense, but is otherwise, to put it bluntly, frit. To engage in clear, defensible positions on hot button issues that influence school policy, the media and cultural institutions risks them being smoked out in the open about things that may well be poll kryptonite and tabloid ammunition.

What helps this state of acquiescence is that there are lulls, missteps and retreats in the culture wars, inviting speculation that it's all a distraction or "running out of steam", an artefact of an ebullient post-Brexit Conservative party. And yes, sometimes it is a distraction, sometimes these issues do go away for a while. But the potential for new momentum is always there, ready to be accelerated by a media that loves a good war, whatever the speed.

Just look at the vigour with which newspapers ran front pages on education secretary Nadhim Zahawi's guidelines and Dowden's Washington speech, amping them up to claim that Black Lives Matter's "biased" views are to be avoided (the Times), that students are being "indoctrinated" (the Daily Mail), and that Dowden's words must be translated into "action" (the Telegraph). You don't have to have a sophisticated grasp of what "woke" means to absorb the message being sent here: if you don't vote for the Conservative party again and again, bad things are going to happen.

With a zombie prime minister and a Brexit wrung of populist opportunities, culture wars campaigning will likely intensify in the lead-up to the local elections in May - and the next general election. There will be a lot of "Mr Dowden goes to Washington" silliness about woke maths, but there will also be a lot of gravely serious, opinion-forming, institution-changing propaganda and policy that we on the left cannot simply pretend we are rising above. In fact we are just hiding, hoping and praying that it won't be crucial to refreshing the chances of a desperate government out of ideas. That sounds pretty risky to me.

The Guardian

Founded 1821 Independently owned by the Scott Trust N^o 54,586
'Comment is free... but facts are sacred' CP Scott

Environment

The government must get a grip on the underpowered green economy of Britain

In the lead-up to Cop26 in November, Boris Johnson was at his most panglossian as he extolled the economic benefits of the country's transition to net zero. "The UK's path to ending our contribution to climate change," the prime minister forecast, "will be paved with well-paid jobs, billions in investment and thriving green industries ... by moving first and taking bold action, we will build a defining competitive edge in electric vehicles, offshore wind, carbon capture technology and more."

Back in the real world, matters stand rather differently. Far from forging ahead of the rest, Britain risks falling behind in the new industrial revolution, as latest figures from the Office for National Statistics make depressingly clear. The green economy more or less flatlined between 2014 and 2020, the ONS found. Employment in the low-carbon and renewable energy sectors - which include manufacturing, energy supply and construction - actually fell. This dismal state of affairs predated the Covid pandemic and the accompanying recession.

The present administration cannot be blamed for the poor performance of its Tory predecessors, but it is signally failing to learn from their mistakes. Windy rhetoric is not enough. To a far greater extent, the state must play a strategic role in shaping and investing in the green economy. In the renewable energy sector, a reliance on importing turbines and other components means that too many of the well-paid "green-collar" jobs to which Mr Johnson refers are located abroad. Similarly, the government's instinctive aversion to state intervention has led to a failure to properly invest

in a green future for the steel industry. Green steel will be fundamental to a net zero economy, but as Stephen Kinnock, the Labour MP for Port Talbot, has pointed out, other countries are leaving the UK behind in the race to modernise. A national retrofit programme is urgently needed to increase energy efficiency in people's homes. But the government's reluctance to adequately pump-prime a nascent market means another chance to secure good jobs linked to the green transition is being squandered.

Sadly, the government's ideological direction of travel is towards less, not more, intervention. As Mr Johnson attempts merely to survive in office following partygate, influential sections of his party are determined to force his administration to adopt a still more laissez-faire approach. Last week, the prime minister's new chief of staff, Stephen Barclay, suggested that in the wake of the pandemic, it was time to for the government to "step back" from people's lives. The Treasury's determination to rein in public spending post-Covid signals that necessary green subsidies and investment will not be forthcoming, and the cost-of-living crisis is being used by Conservative backbenchers such as Steve Baker to present the green agenda as an expensive imposition on the less well-off. Welcome developments, such as £100m of government money for a car battery manufacturing startup in Blyth, are too small-scale and too ad hoc.

Last week's ONS report must be a wake-up call. An enormous opportunity risks being wasted through a combination of misplaced ideology, blinkered short-termism and lack of strategic imagination and ambition in Whitehall. In the parts of the country that suffered most from ruthless and precipitate deindustrialisation in the 1980s, the path to net zero can be a catalyst for renewal. The state, the private sector, trade unions and local communities can deliver this by working together. But only if the scale of Johnsonian rhetoric is matched by deeds.

Education

Highly selective sixth forms give a boost to an already elitist system

A contradiction sits at the heart of the British education system, and most particularly the English one. This has been the case since most secondary schools in England switched from a selective system to a comprehensive one in the 1960s. The contradiction is that the mixed-ability principle was never extended to higher education, which continues to be highly stratified. Entry to a handful of elite institutions remains the ultimate prize. As schools policy sought to create a less divided society, in which people from different backgrounds were expected to mix, universities (and the policymakers overseeing them) have clung to hierarchies. Admissions data over decades has shown these to be social as well as intellectual, with the more affluent claiming a disproportionate share of places.

The development of a new cadre of super-selective state sixth forms, which the government has promised to accelerate as part of its levelling up strategy, is designed to address this. Comprehensives struggle to compete with the hothouse conditions of independent and grammar schools, some of which have links to Oxbridge dating back centuries. A few academically elite sixth forms have had striking successes.

If the aim is to boost the chances of a handful of underprivileged teenagers getting their hands on one of these golden tickets, teaching them in a highly competitive environment might seem to make sense. The problem is that the purpose of post-16 education is much broader than this. We need a system that benefits society overall, including by putting more resources

behind improved vocational options, as advocated by the three-year-old Augar review. The worrying signs are that the trend towards increased selection at 16 will magnify the damaging tendency to concentrate too much on a few, while ignoring the rest. While around 85% of 17-year-olds in England are in full-time education, fewer than half of 16- to 18-year-olds do A-levels. The further education sector is currently battling to save BTecs, whose replacement with T-levels has been delayed.

Of course, competition is part of life, which young people must learn to cope with. The brightest sixth-formers in poor areas have every right to aim high. But increased selection brings defeats as well as successes. And there are good reasons to defer painful experiences of rejection (the impact of failing the 11-plus was one reason why comprehensives replaced grammars in the first place). This is all the more pressing given extremely worrying evidence about young people's declining mental health.

Education, and particularly skills and training, is crucial to any inequality-reducing strategy. Age 16 (when most pupils sit GCSEs) is a crucial staging post. But there is no evidence that dividing students up at this point results in higher attainment. Strong results posted by selective sixth forms may simply show that they have successfully creamed off the most capable and determined members of a cohort.

The levelling up agenda promised by the Tories should have led them straight to colleges, which were particularly hard-hit by austerity, and also to the underresourced careers service. But instead of investing in local institutions, developing their links with employers and improving their offer to older learners, ministers have held out the promise of a few more ladders to top universities, at the same time as reducing access to higher education overall. Elite sixth forms are a gimmick, not an answer to the question of how to level up.



Through 2020 and 2021, the government employed the slogan ‘Build back better’. Now those words are nowhere to be seen

trying to somehow save £80m over two years, which means cuts to children’s social care, work with young offenders, education services and school transport.

Through 2020 and 2021, the government employed a slogan that had been in sporadic circulation for at least 15 years, and was soon adopted by Joe Biden: “Build back better”. Now, at the very point you might have thought those three words would be more ubiquitous than ever, they are nowhere to be seen.

More than ever, Johnson says whatever he thinks suits the moment and then moves on to something else. But even if he was halfway serious about using the state to radically rebalance the economy and society, Rishi Sunak’s Treasury would balk at the spending involved – and in any case, an ideological shift is afoot in the Conservative party that looks likely to jettison even the meek kind of interventionism laid out in the “levelling up” white paper. Johnson’s chief of staff, the MP Steve Barclay, says the prime minister is now “taking a close look” at how government can be hacked back, and that “it is a priority to restore a smaller state – both financially and in taking a step back from people’s lives”. For these Tories, the pandemic’s sudden burst of interventionism and collectivist thinking was terrifying: now they are reaching for the rewind button.

Labour clearly has different intentions, but still risks being complicit in Westminster’s state of willed amnesia. Keir Starmer currently seems to be deep into the “I’m not Jeremy Corbyn” stage of his leadership, which is understandable but is also getting in the way of him convincingly speaking to the moment. His three watchwords are “security, prosperity and respect” – all abstract nouns, presumably chosen because they come up in focus groups, but not exactly brimming with meaning or topicality. In a technocratic lingo reminiscent of the 1990s, Labour’s plans for the economy promise a “learning”, “investing”, “innovating” and “trading” Britain, too often omitting the moral aspects of life and work that Covid has pushed to the surface. From time to time, Starmer talks about what we have all been through, but there is still no real sense of a centre-left party confidently speaking to a country reeling from the loss of 180,000 people, and the experience of every aspect of its collective life being upended.

If you want to instantly understand the normality we are returning to, consider the weekend’s reports in the Sunday Times about the Tory party’s “advisory board” of 14 unbelievably wealthy donors, and allegations that some of them lobbied ministers to prematurely relax “measures designed to stop [Covid] transmission”, as well as voicing their opposition to “higher tax for the ultra-rich”. When I read that, I thought of something George Orwell wrote in 1941, about the kind of Tory who believed that when the second world war was over, the country could be pushed “back to ‘democracy’, ie capitalism, back to dole queues and the Rolls-Royce cars, back to the grey top hats and the sponge-bag trousers”. England is a country with a tragic habit of simultaneously being obsessed with tradition and forgetting its own history.

It says something about where we have arrived that those words sound less like a blast from the past than a very urgent warning.

Where is the payback after two years of Covid sacrifices?

John Harris



This week, England arrives at a moment that will fit the Boris Johnson era to perfection. Even if the pandemic is not quite over – symbolised by news of the Queen testing positive – everything is being arranged to convince us that it is. Today, the prime minister is expected to explain his government’s “living with Covid” strategy, and on Thursday, most remaining Covid rules and restrictions will be lifted.

Although Northern Ireland seems to be taking a similar route, Scotland and Wales are again being more cautious, and that is presumably the way Johnson likes it. Here is an opportunity for him to show the libertarian, Brexit backbench hardcore which seems to now run the Conservative party that their home country is blazing a trail towards the dazzling uplands of freedom and easy living, and all is once again well.

Clearly, it isn’t. This latest set of moves only highlights a basic fact of life in early 2022 that has been strangely overlooked. Thankfully, the pandemic is waning, but after two years of sacrifice and hurt, there is no sign of any political payback. The worsening situation in Ukraine may make such talk look misplaced, but we were chivvied through the Covid crisis with endless comparisons to wartime and the supposed glories of the Blitz spirit, while our equivalent of “peace” is impossible living costs, cuts to public spending and the inertia of a government consumed with its own problems. If the public mood feels almost numb, this is a big part of the reason why.

As ever, the everyday state of things is highlighted by the position of city and local government. A new financial year looms, and any extra money from Whitehall does not meet the rising need for the most basic local services, nor cover deficits caused by the Covid crisis (a good example is the loss of town and city centre parking charges). So, Nottingham city council has to hack £28m from its spending, and is shutting children’s centres and youth services. In Sheffield, they are reviewing library services and considering cutting vulnerable people’s home care; in Croydon, the council is about to get rid of the council tax support worth up to £29 a week to thousands of the borough’s most vulnerable people. Tory-run Hampshire, meanwhile, is

Boris Johnson watches while Gordon Halfacre receives a Covid vaccine from corporal Lorna MacDonald, Northampton, January 2022

PHOTO: PETER CZIBORRA/REUTERS



A proxy war in Ukraine is a fools' errand

Simon Tisdall



Indications that Britain and the US are secretly preparing to arm resistance fighters in Ukraine in the event of an invasion should raise red flags, and not just of the Russian variety. The effectiveness and wisdom of intervening in other people's conflicts by proxy, however seemingly justified, are open to serious question, as cold war-era history suggests.

The mere mention of the word "resistance" conjures up, in some British minds at least, images of gallant bicyclists in berets, night-time airstrips lit by torches, and furtive wireless operators valiantly plotting to thwart the "Boche". The recent film *Munich: the Edge of War*, in which "good" Germans conspire against "bad" ones, is a reminder that things are usually more complicated. Resistance has many faces.

Tentative plans under discussion in Washington and London to supply weapons and other military equipment to Ukrainians who object to Kremlin-enforced regime change presuppose that Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, will launch the long-anticipated invasion and succeed in overthrowing Kyiv's elected government. Neither eventuality is a given. Putin may continue indefinitely to mess with western heads. An invasion could be repelled.

Yet since Joe Biden, the US president, and Boris Johnson, his little trumpet boy, seem convinced that the worst will happen - the "biggest war in Europe since 1945", in the British prime minister's melodramatic words - it is only logical to assume the secret talks about post-invasion strategies have acquired a new urgency.

Most public opinion undoubtedly sympathises with the Ukrainian citizens contemplating the destruction of their country's independence and democracy at the point of a gun. Understandably, many people's gut instinct is to resist by all means possible. All the same, officially encouraging what could quickly turn into an extremely violent, long-running, possibly unwinnable struggle requires careful, calm consideration.

It's easy to agitate for a fight when someone else is doing the fighting and when it's happening a long way away. There's a moral issue here: if you yourself decline to bloody your hands, should you really be egging on others to do so? If that does not give pause, then think about the practical implications.

By helping Ukrainian guerrillas or freedom fighters or people's militias (the terminology alone is problematic) to kill Russian soldiers, the US and Britain would, in effect, be waging a proxy war against Russia. Russia would know this. Would it passively accept it? Or would it return fire in similarly unpleasant, asymmetrical and hybrid ways? Of course it would. Has Johnson thought about that?

Then again, western powers are pretty hopeless at fighting proxy wars via resistance groups. Think of Ronald Reagan's disastrous Contra war in Nicaragua in the 1980s. Think of the Cuban Bay of Pigs, or how Iraq's Shias and Kurds were urged to revolt in 1991 by George HW Bush and subsequently betrayed. Saddam Hussein slaughtered them by the thousand. Western politicians, prating about principle then as now, utterly failed them.

Resistance groups can be hard to control. They travel unexpected paths. The most notorious example is Afghanistan, where some US-armed mujahideen groups fighting the post-1979 Soviet occupation went on to create the Taliban, who turned on their creators like Mary Shelley's monster.

Proxy wars often do more harm than good, and western powers are not their only proponents. Consider the misery inflicted upon Yemen's desperate people by the proxy fight between regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia. History is littered with examples of countries where liberators, in overthrowing oppression, became oppressors. Look at Iran, look at Angola. The contrary argument is that each case is different. Ukraine is different. And so it is, at present. But a western-backed insurgency there could morph into confrontation with Russia. It's easy to see Johnson starting such a fight. Knowing him as we do, it's hard to see him finishing it.

Ukraine needs all the support it can get. But the best way to help - if it is generally agreed that is the right thing to do - is not to start a dirty war of assassinations, bombings, broken families and broken hearts. If Johnson and Biden truly want to make a difference - and ensure Putin backs off - they should assume the risk themselves, by offering full Nato membership to Ukraine's government while it still has one. Don't send young Ukrainians to fight and die for democracy while you sit at home, declaring how terrible it all is. Stand up for what you say you believe, or pipe down.

Established 1906

Country diary
Otley, West Yorkshire

The unruly chorus of common starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) fills the fields to the east of Otley, sending the sounds of chattering, chirping, tweeting and trilling across a radius of at least half a mile. I immediately feel my spirits perk up at the sound of this jostling collective conversation, a ball of bright white noise in an otherwise muted February landscape.

I get closer and see hundreds of dark silhouettes festooning the bare branches of a tall ash tree. Starlings are sometimes the subject of a certain petty prejudice; perhaps there is something uncomfortably insectoid in the way they teem and swarm, in their collective intelligence. Even their oily, iridescent plumage – which looks black at a distance but up-close shimmers green and purple like a puddle of petrol – has a hint of beetle armour about it.

This group intellect is what enables starlings to produce their famous strobing, morphing murmurations, and while I don’t see this happen today, I do get a hint of the hive mind in action. I walk towards the tree, but clearly get a bit too close, and the entire flock instantly muzzles itself, like the saloon falling silent in a western. A few moments of silence, the swarm sizes me up, and the cacophony gradually starts up again. I’m not very threatening, it seems, but the speed of their massed decision-making seems to border on the telepathic.

Starling numbers plummeted a staggering 87% between 1967 and 2015, and are still in freefall. The rise of industrial agriculture is thought to be one of the possible causes, but the lightly managed fields around here probably still provide the birds with a rich larder of invertebrate food. This is just one example of the biodiversity value of this swathe of open country, and Leeds city council is to be commended for listening to local voices and deciding to rethink its initial plans for a massive, poorly considered housing development in these fields.

This is good news, at least for now. Any new plans must accommodate all the animal occupants of this landscape, not just the human ones.
Carey Davies

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Real reform goes beyond abolishing the monarchy

Martin Kettle’s thoughtful article on the future of the monarchy (Journal, 17 February) ended with the phrase “a story about the kind of country we choose to be”. Am I unduly pessimistic in thinking we have very little choice? The norms of our society are set primarily by huge international technology companies and their relationship with advertising and social discourse. Our politics is conducted under systems and conventions that are no longer fit for purpose, where the House of Lords seems more representative of democracy and justice than either the Commons or the government. Not even supporters of Brexit can have chosen to bring the country to its present sorry state. And there is nothing we (the people) can do, until the powers allow us another vote.

Yes, the monarchy needs changing (or for some, abolishing), but the whole structure is in desperate need of reform. The status of the monarchy, the power and structure of the executive, the powers of legislation and scrutiny of parliament, the methods of election and appointment, justice and accountability – all these and no doubt other matters need to be examined publicly and forensically in citizens’ assemblies. Then “we” can choose, and it is to be hoped that our political establishment will

listen and put through parliament the bulk of our wishes, regardless of the vested interests against them.
Hugh Legge
Northampton

● It is unfortunate that Simon Jenkins (Whisper it, but the time is right for the Queen to abdicate, 15 February) does not stay with his thought that the head of state being chosen by birth and religion is inherently absurd. It is also inherently undemocratic. Tom Nairn, in his work *The Enchanted Glass*, proposes that the “constitutional monarchy” is “both the apex and essence of the British state, the symbol of its backwardness”.

It is simply not the case that the monarchy’s role is powerless and “emphatically detached from political partisanship”. The powers are real, even if not usually exercised. The recent revelations of the process of Queen’s consent further undermine the notion of being free from partisanship and independent of the political process.

The removal of the crown from the constitution and an elected second house are minimum requirements for a modern and mature democracy.
Nigel Florence
Mevagissey, Cornwall

It’s a hard day’s night trying to get to sleep

At 97, getting to sleep can be a complicated affair (Letters, 17 February). I greet my first God, Jehovah, with a little prayer, then say “hello” to Allah followed by my Hindu friend, and finally turn to Buddha before counting to 100, doing relaxation exercises. Turning from my right to left side, I start all over again.

Somehow, I must sleep because I wake up in the early hours to relieve myself. And bingo, returning to bed I think back to the good days when I was 20. Getting

up to shower is an effort that is manageable between 8am and 10am. And the day begins.
Gabriel Aitman
Northwood, London

● When I have trouble getting to sleep, or actually more often getting back to sleep after having had to go to the loo at around 3am, I have tried to develop a strategy (counting anything has never worked for me) whereby I have to use all the letters in the alphabet for lists in a particular category.

Cornish people need support, not abuse

Sir Tim Smit’s intemperate denunciation of Cornish people as “tossers” for looking back to the good old days helps to highlight a number of things about contemporary Cornwall (Eden Project co-founder takes a swipe at Cornish nostalgia, 17 February).

First, we should understand why many look back to a time before tourism and mass immigration made affording a decent home, or a home at all, beyond the

reach of many Cornish people. The Cornish are now a minority in Cornwall, and are more likely to experience unemployment, low wages and poor health than non-Cornish residents.

Second, Smit’s remarks are not just offensive, they are possibly racist insofar as the Cornish are a recognised ethnic minority, a protected characteristic. Perhaps Mr Smit should look a little further into what Cornish people are

● It is refreshing to see Polly Toynbee argue clearly for the end of our feudal and anachronistic monarchy (We lose more than we gain with monarchy. Let’s end it now, 18 February). The Queen is rightly admired for her lifelong service, even by many of us who advocate for a republican Britain. This is the time to do it with minimum fuss and rancour, almost a celebration of Her Majesty as Polly shrewdly recommends, before moving on to becoming a modern European state.

There is no guarantee that the Queen’s successors will be like her. Electing our head of state would allow all the safeguards that Polly mentions to come into effect. Most importantly, it will pull the rug away from class-based entitlement that has bred a nation of inequality. And let’s have some meaningful honours – drop the “empire” as if it were alive and well, and something that citizens who serve their country and society should be made “members” of.
Christopher Tanner
Llandovery, Carmarthenshire

● Polly Toynbee is right. The future of the monarchy is worthy of a full-blown inquiry. It will take time to reach its conclusions, but who seriously thinks that hereditary peers is a feature we should be happy with in the 21st century, and will there ever be a more suitable monarch to be the last? It is time to start the process.
Andrew Dean
Exeter

Capital cities, English football clubs (I do ignore X and Z, but thank you QPR). The single-word names of pop groups (ie Abba) work, but not the Beatles.

However, here’s the thing about the Beatles. I’ve tried to recall A-Z Beatles songs (here I use every word in the title) repeatedly over the years. There is no V. Maybe Lennon and McCartney knew and kept a song back? I have had to watch every second of the eight hours of *Get Back* through the night for clues – a hard day’s night indeed. Help!
Frank Newhofer
Oxford

doing to develop their economy, culture and language, and be supportive rather than abusive.
Prof Malcolm Williams
Cardiff University

● Surely Cornish folk need to lighten up a little about Tim Smit’s words. When I was a lad up north, I don’t recall being unduly troubled by that old favourite: “Derbyshire born and Derbyshire bred: strong in the arm and weak in the head.”
Alan Hallsworth
Waterlooville, Hampshire

Corrections and clarifications

● There were several wrong notes in an article on live shows: **Buddy Holly and the Crickets** were said to consist of “two guitars, bass, and drums”, whereas by their 1958 UK tour they were a trio, with Holly the sole guitarist; the “**Hammersmith Apollo**”, which hosted David Bowie’s 1973 gig, was at that time the **Hammersmith Odeon**; and a blue plaque marking the **Who’s 1970 University of Leeds show** was installed by **Leeds Civic Trust**, not **English Heritage** (Now that’s what I call music..., 11 February, G2, p6).

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Learning about joy from the Germans

It’s a pity the English language hasn’t also adopted the word *mitfreude* (“with joy”) from the German, but only its negative opposite – *schadenfreude* (G2, 16 February). *Mitfreude* is the joyful emotion we experience when we delight in others’ good news, happiness or joy. How strange that we don’t seem to have a word for it.
Martina Crowther-Menn
Cambridge

● Arwa Mahdawi refers to the Adam Smith Institute’s proposals (Privatising the moon may sound like a crazy idea but the sky’s no limit for avarice, theguardian.com, 17 February), but this is not new. The influential sci-fi author Robert A Heinlein published *The Man Who Sold the Moon* in 1950, describing predatory late capitalism trying to do just that.
John Wilson
London

● Interesting to read suggestions of gigs that changed music (Letters, 19 February), but I am upset by your error in saying Buddy Holly was the first rock’n’roll act to tour the country when we had rocked and rolled to Bill Haley a year earlier.
Valerie Gidlow
Faversham, Kent

● Having had a childhood in rural Wales, it was always amusing when visiting my widowed mother – who was living away from Wales – that we took our shoes off by the front door and wiped the soles with disinfectant (Letters, 19 February). My mother was keen to keep well living on her own – she died at 96.
Helen Evans
Ruthin, Denbighshire

● I look to the shoes and slippers to see who’s home.
Lucie Galvin
Balboa Island, California, US



Jan Pieńkowski

Illustrator and creator of the Meg and Mog children's books who used paper cut-outs to great effect

Jan Pieńkowski, who has died aged 85, was a most original illustrator, writer and designer of pop-up books, whose Polish childhood and experiences as a wartime refugee fed into his mesmerising work. He published more than 140 books for children and described the essence of his prodigious output simply as telling stories in pictures.

Pieńkowski's characteristic style is immediately recognisable. For younger readers he worked in bright colours and used bold shapes. For older children, he often used a more varied palette with his trademark colourful ink

washes as a background to black paper cut-outs. One of his most successful titles, in collaboration with the writer Helen Nicoll from 1972 until her death in 2012, was *Meg and Mog*, a series of illustrated adventures about a somewhat hapless witch and her stripy cat. Pieńkowski said in an interview that *Meg and Mog* gave him the opportunity to use terrible monsters from his childhood and make them into harmless toys.

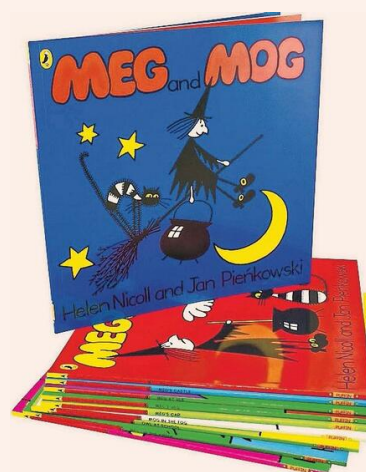
He won the Kate Greenaway award in 1971 with the writer Joan Aiken for their second collaboration, *The Kingdom Under the Sea*. This was composed of the eastern European fairy tales that were close to Pieńkowski's

heart and featured an early appearance of his beautiful silhouette illustrations. Their first collaboration was the equally delicately illustrated *A Necklace of Raindrops* (1968). His interest in paper cut-outs, he said, stemmed from a wartime experience in an air raid shelter in Warsaw, where a soldier had kept the young Pieńkowski amused by cutting newspapers into wonderful shapes.

The masterful *Haunted House* won Pieńkowski his second Greenaway award, in 1979. This deliciously scary yet funny pop-up book changed what could be achieved through paper

Pieńkowski at home in his west London studio in 2010, with a drawing of Meg, Mog and Owl. Right, Meg and Mog and his pop-up book Haunted House, both first published in the 1970s

SARAH LEE/THE GUARDIAN; PUFFIN



He did admit that some Slavic folk tales are pretty terrifying

engineering and he went on to explore this genre with titles including the inventive and funny *Robot* (1981) and the thrilling *Little Monsters* (1986).

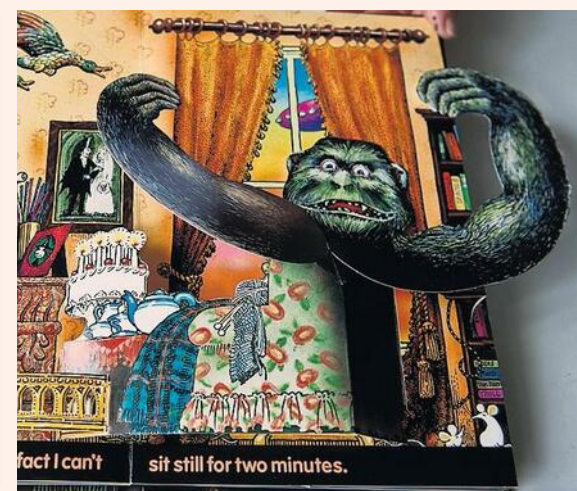
One or two critics questioned the frightening nature of many of his picture books, and he certainly had a tendency towards the macabre and gothic. Another inspiration for Pieńkowski was comics. As he put it, "the violence and hyperbole of the Old Testament stories found an echo in *Desperate Dan* and *Dennis the Menace*. They also gave me my palette." He insisted that children like to be frightened in a safe place, although he did admit that some Slavic folk tales are pretty terrifying.

Born in Warsaw, Jan was the only child of Jerzy Pieńkowski, a country squire before the second world war, and Wanda (nee Garlicka), a scientist. It was while being cared for by a neighbour that Jan first encountered the terrifying tales about a Baba Yaga-type figure. The woman would tell him "these totally unsuitable stories, get to a cliffhanger - and stop. I used to have terrible dreams, nightmares, of this witch, always chasing me and trying to put me in a pot ... I think in a way she gave birth to Meg."

Rural life on a farm was cut short, however, when the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939. The family moved to Warsaw, where his mother's family lived, and his father worked briefly as a bailiff. When Jan was five years old, Jerzy, who had helped organise resistance groups, had to go underground for a year.

The family then left Warsaw and travelled around Europe, including to Vienna, Italy and Germany, experiencing many hazards. They often lived in extreme hardship, and for a period they were forced to sleep in pits under train tracks. In 1946, they finally moved to Britain. Pieńkowski almost broke down when talking about this time in his life on *Desert Island Discs* in 2009, saying that shrill sounds and screaming still frightened him.

As a young child, Pieńkowski was taught by his mother, who encouraged his passion for drawing and making things. On arrival in Britain, aged 10, he was sent to Lucton boarding school in Herefordshire, and added English



to his already fluent German, Italian and Polish. His passion for art developed further after he started life-drawing classes at the age of 13.

When the family moved to London, he attended the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial school in Holland Park, where he learned Latin and Greek, before going on to King's College, Cambridge, to study classics and English. There he got to know Nicholas Tucker, the psychologist, critic and writer on children's literature, and an enduring friendship began.

Although he was studying literature, even then Pieńkowski was busy illustrating for Granta magazine and designing posters for university theatre productions. Before Cambridge, Pieńkowski had spent a couple of months in Rome, one of his favourite cities, where he discovered opera. This love of the arts was a constant in his life.

In the early days of his career Pieńkowski was employed to draw live on a BBC television children's programme, Watch!, and it was through that work that he first met Nicoll, then the producer of the show. He also worked in book-jacket design, advertising and greeting cards.

After Nicoll died in 2012, he added further Meg and Mog titles with new stories written by his partner, David Walser. Pieńkowski and Walser, a translator, artist, musician and writer, had been together for more than 40 years when they became civil partners in 2005 – as soon as it was possible to do so – settling in Hammersmith, west London. A devout Catholic, Pieńkowski was sorry not to be able to have the union solemnised in church, although his priest said vespers for the couple.

He produced several books with religious themes, such as *The First Christmas* (2014) and *In the Beginning* (2010), the latter with Walser's masterful adaptations from the King James bible. Other collaborations with Walser included a take on ETA Hoffmann's original Nutcracker story (2008), *The Glass Mountain: Tales from Poland* (2016), and a picture book retelling of Homer's *The Odyssey* (2019).

Pieńkowski was charming, good humoured and popular, with a streak of eccentricity. He was deeply attached to Britain and enjoyed life in London, but still felt close to his homeland, spoke Polish and had many Polish friends. He had a habit of picking up old discarded clothing and wearing it – probably a leftover from having had so little in the war years.

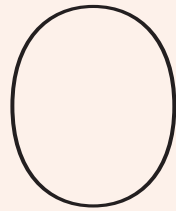
Never without a little black notebook, he was constantly drawing from life. In 2019 he was awarded the Booktrust lifetime achievement award.

He is survived by Walser.
Morag Styles

Jan Michał Pieńkowski, illustrator, writer and designer, born 8 August 1936; died 19 February 2022

James Wharram

Catamaran builder, maverick adventurer and Atlantic sailor



On 27 September 1955, James Wharram set sail from Falmouth in a 23½ft flat-bottomed double canoe (now called a catamaran)

that he had built himself at a cost of £200, with no engine, and none of the electronic navigation equipment today's sailors take for granted. His quest was to cross the Atlantic, in order to prove that such a vessel, the ancient craft of the Polynesians, was an oceanworthy one. The boat was called Tangaroa, after the Polynesian god of the sea.

With Wharram, who has died aged 93, were two German women, Jutta Schultze-Rhonhof and Ruth Merseburger, both of whom he was romantically involved with. "They were happy to share 'their man'," he wrote. "There was no jealousy."

Wharram's book about this and subsequent voyages was titled *Two Girls, Two Catamarans* (1969) and it seemed like the ultimate hippy adventure, before hippies had been invented. But the trip was difficult. There were storms in the Bay of Biscay; in Spain Franco's Guardia Civil thought the travellers were spies; in Gran Canaria they encountered former SS officers escaping to South America; they nearly capsized twice crossing the Atlantic.

Shultze-Rhonhof and Wharram were seasick and she found out she was pregnant. Meanwhile Tangaroa's wooden hulls were being eaten by shipworms. Somehow, after a gruelling five-week crossing, they reached Trinidad. If anything, though, it was more like a beginning than an end. Schultze-Rhonhof

gave birth to a son named Hannes. Wharram built a new, bigger catamaran, named Rongo, that they sailed to New York, arriving in 1959.

There he found himself alongside Sir Edmund Hillary on a television quiz show called *To Tell the Truth*; the audience had to guess which of the three contestants posing as the mountaineer was the real one. Hillary helped Wharram win, and with the prize money he was able to buy a radio for his next voyage, another Atlantic crossing, back to Britain later that year. Wharram was well on his way to a life of seafaring, boat design and boatbuilding.

He was born in Manchester, the only child of James, a builder, and his wife, Blanche (nee Cook). As a teenager Wharram enjoyed climbing and roaming the moors. He also spent hours in the city's central library reading about boats, particularly about the ancient Polynesian boats. The *Voyage of the Kaimiloa* by Éric de Bisschop (1939), about sailing from Hawaii to France, became a lifelong love and inspiration. He also studied George Bernard Shaw, HG Wells, Bertrand Russell, William Morris, Adam Smith, Karl Marx and John Maynard Keynes; he became chairman of a Labour party youth group, but was saved from politics by his wanderlust.

Wharram left technical college to travel and work around Europe, where he discovered a new love – women. Traudl, an Austrian psychologist, introduced him to Freud and Jung. Pat, an American 10 years his senior, gave him a book called *Boat Building in Your Own Back Yard*. Back in the UK, he worked as a labourer, on a trawler,

in a boatyard. Walking in the Lake District, he met Merseburger, who would accompany him on that first transatlantic voyage on Tangaroa with Schultze-Rhonhof, whom he had met at a swimming pool.

Wharram married Schultze-Rhonhof in 1959, but she had a breakdown and died in 1961. Five years later, Wharram married Merseburger. They remained together until her death in 2013, joined in the late 1960s by Hanneke Boon, who met Wharram when her family, holidaying in Wales, had helped him on another boat-building project. He and Hanneke had a son, Jamie.

There were other women coming and going, further catamarans, and further adventurous trips, then a business the three of them ran together from Cornwall, where they settled. Wharram designed catamarans based on Polynesian principles, and they sold the designs.

These are not boats for the wealthy, but for enthusiasts to get to sea cheaply. And Wharram was not a typical yachtsman; it is not surprising the sailing establishment has often viewed him with suspicion.

He was impossible to ignore, though, and slowly they came round to him. "Who is James Wharram?" asked the yachting writer Tom Cunliffe in *Sail* magazine in 2007. "Is he a philosopher, or a crackpot? A lifestyle guru or a libertine? Could he be a madman or might he be perhaps, unsettlingly sane? One thing is certain: he was one of 20th-century seafaring's most famous figures." In 2018 he won a lifetime achievement award from *Classic Boat* magazine.

In his last years Wharram had Alzheimer's disease. "He struggled with his diminished existence," wrote Boon, whom he married in 2018. "He could not face the prospect of further disintegration and made the very hard call to end it himself."

He is survived by Hanneke, Hannes (now known as Jonathan) and Jamie.
Sam Wollaston

James Wharram, sailor and boat designer, born 15 May 1928; died 14 December 2021



Wharram named his home-built catamaran Tangaroa after the Polynesian god of the sea

Birthdays

Eniola Aluko, footballer and commentator, 35; **Sir John Bourn**, former head of the National Audit Office, 88; **James Dean Bradfield**, musician, 53; **Sara Britcliffe**, Conservative MP, 27; **Jean-Jacques Burnel**, musician, 70; **Jake Burns**, singer and guitarist, 64; **Charlotte Church**, singer, 36; **Jilly Cooper**, novelist, 85; **Tyne Daly**, actor, 76; **Anthony Daniels**, actor, 76; **Vanessa Feltz**, broadcaster, 60; **Jonathan Safran Foer**, author, 45; **Lady (Janet) Fookes**, former Conservative MP, 86; **Hannah Fry**, mathematician, writer and broadcaster, 38; **David Geffen**, music and film producer, 79; **Dame Helen Ghosh**, former director general, National Trust, 66; **Prof Usha Goswami**, neuroscientist, 62; **Kelsey Grammer**, actor, 67; **Harald V**, King of Norway, 85; **Magnus Linklater**, journalist, 80; **Michael McIntyre**, comedian and broadcaster 46; **Tuppence Middleton**, actor, 35; **Neil Oliver**, archaeologist, author and broadcaster, 55; **Chuck Palahniuk**, writer, 60; **Olga Polizzi**, hotelier, 76; **Christina Rees**, Labour MP, 68; **Sophie Turner**, actor, 26; **David Wood**, actor and playwright, 78.

Letters

Bamber Gascoigne

In 1962 I was one of eight members of the union drama group at Manchester University, invited to form two guinea-pig teams for a new TV quiz show to be named University Challenge.

Sitting at two trestle tables in an empty studio at Granada TV, and with a brief to be a bit "studenty", we were there to help audition prospective candidates to chair it. No buzzers yet, simply a sharp tap on the table with a pencil.

The winner stood out head and shoulders above the others. Kind, witty, urbane, scholarly, old beyond his years and already in charge of the format, it was, of course, Bamber Gascoigne (obituary, 9 February), setting the show's tone for the next 25 years.
Peter Kenwyn Jones

Bamber Gascoigne displayed a sustained commitment to Liberal politics. He regularly put his name to appeals for the Liberal party and, more recently, the Liberal Democrats, seeing a natural connection between his involvement in the world of the arts and Liberal values.
Michael Meadowcroft



Reread our obituaries of the Italian actor Monica Vitti and the humorist and satirist PJ O'Rourke
theguardian.com/obituaries

8Puzzles

Saturday's solutions

Sandwich sudoku

1	3	6	4	8	5	2	9	7	28
2	8	9	3	7	1	4	5	6	10
4	7	5	9	6	2	3	8	1	19
3	5	8	6	1	9	7	2	4	0
6	9	4	7	2	8	1	3	5	21
7	2	1	5	4	3	8	6	9	26
8	6	7	2	9	4	5	1	3	9
9	1	3	8	5	7	6	4	2	0
5	4	2	1	3	6	9	7	8	9
30	8	17	28	6	2	19	24	9	

Killer Sudoku 801

7	8	2	1	5	6	9	4	3
9	1	6	7	3	4	8	5	2
4	3	5	2	9	8	7	1	6
1	9	3	6	2	7	4	8	5
5	4	8	9	1	3	6	2	7
2	6	7	8	4	5	3	9	1
6	5	1	4	7	9	2	3	8
8	2	4	3	6	1	5	7	9
3	7	9	5	8	2	1	6	4

Cryptic crossword

Solution No. 28,679

D	H	R	A	O	I	M
F	R	A	I	L	E	S
A	T	A	T	E	S	N
T	U	T	T	E	D	A
G	H	M	C	C	A	
W	H	E	E	X	H	I
T	H	F	E	A	R	I
A	S	T	E	R	I	X
M	A	L	F	K	P	C
H	A	N	D	E	D	O
N	L	X	U	L	I	
A	S	P	I	R	A	N
H	N	R	R	B	E	E
D	I	V	E	S	T	
P	S	Y	T	R	T	E

Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of Sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.

18	5			24		5		6		10
	6	16	8				13			
				6	9	12		16		
8	17	14								
		5	13		5		17	10		
9			3	14		20				
20	14			4	12		7			
		8	10						3	
3				24			11			

Medium

4			10	17	19			20	21
19				10	24				
12									
	19			7	22			10	
19	22				7	22			
				11				4	
				4		13	8	16	
	11			17		23			
14									

Codeword

Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.

4	18	12	16	16		12	9	26	12	11	3	4
1		6		22		17		22		21		21
22	23	23	21	25	19	17		18	22	26	10	13
3				12		4		20				5
3	10	8	4	6	14		4	19	11	4	19	21
10		23		23		8		10		7		19
	16	21	4	4	6	23	19		7	6	21	5
15		11				12				22		1
21	11	5	12		19	13	22	14	8	26	19	
11		19		6		10		22		26		17
17	6	23	21	11	3		19	11	2	10	14	19
4				1		22		6				24
12	6	5	17	12		16	23	22	2	2	26	19
18		12		12		22		26		12		18
20	11	12	18	20	19	23		4	1	12	12	5

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13													
14	15	16		17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26												

Guardian cryptic crossword No 28,686 set by Qaos

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
9								10						
11										12				
13				14		15		16						
17		18								19		20		21
22						23				24				
25										26				
27														

Across

- Flamboyant bachelor's game has no limits (7)
- Champion footballer I see (7)
- Indeed, cornet's not even ordered (7)
- Single male working as wise guy (7)
- Clapton covering 10cc? Strangely offbeat (9)
- Flower completes Monet's first artwork (5)
- In Exodus, he battles biblical kingdom (5)
- Surveys struggles to capture wicket after six balls (9)
- Old, old idea by alien to construct a distant Earth? (9)
- One serving drinks spills one drink (5)
- Magnificent devoted leader changing sides (5)
- Sacks carrying trade explosives (9)
- Politician's function to stop terrorists' influences (7)
- Start with 1 + (2 x 22) + 4 + 1 + 50 (7)
- Fights against spoilt sisters (7)
- Fanatical about dressing in some tops? Not these (7)

Down

- Provides the money to move Times? (7)
- How to be green on bike (7)
- Piece of card (5)
- Feathers end up exciting wonder (5,4)
- Add up 1 + 100 to get score (5)
- Very Liberal women labouring to secure victory promise (6,3)
- Great number going for river plunge (7)
- Names on doors? (7)
- Team having only clubs? (3,6)
- Occupy harbour (9)
- Before retailer collapsed, Tesla quit (7)
- During Monopoly, MP usually makes a mountain (7)
- Very extrovert principal wearing fancy shirt with flourishes (7)
- Makes noise like Brand and Bertrand, say? (7)
- Unites English in trouble (5)
- Connected to the internet, tense with excitement (5)



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